

STEVE AUSTIN: "I'M WORRIED, BUT I AIN'T SCARED!"



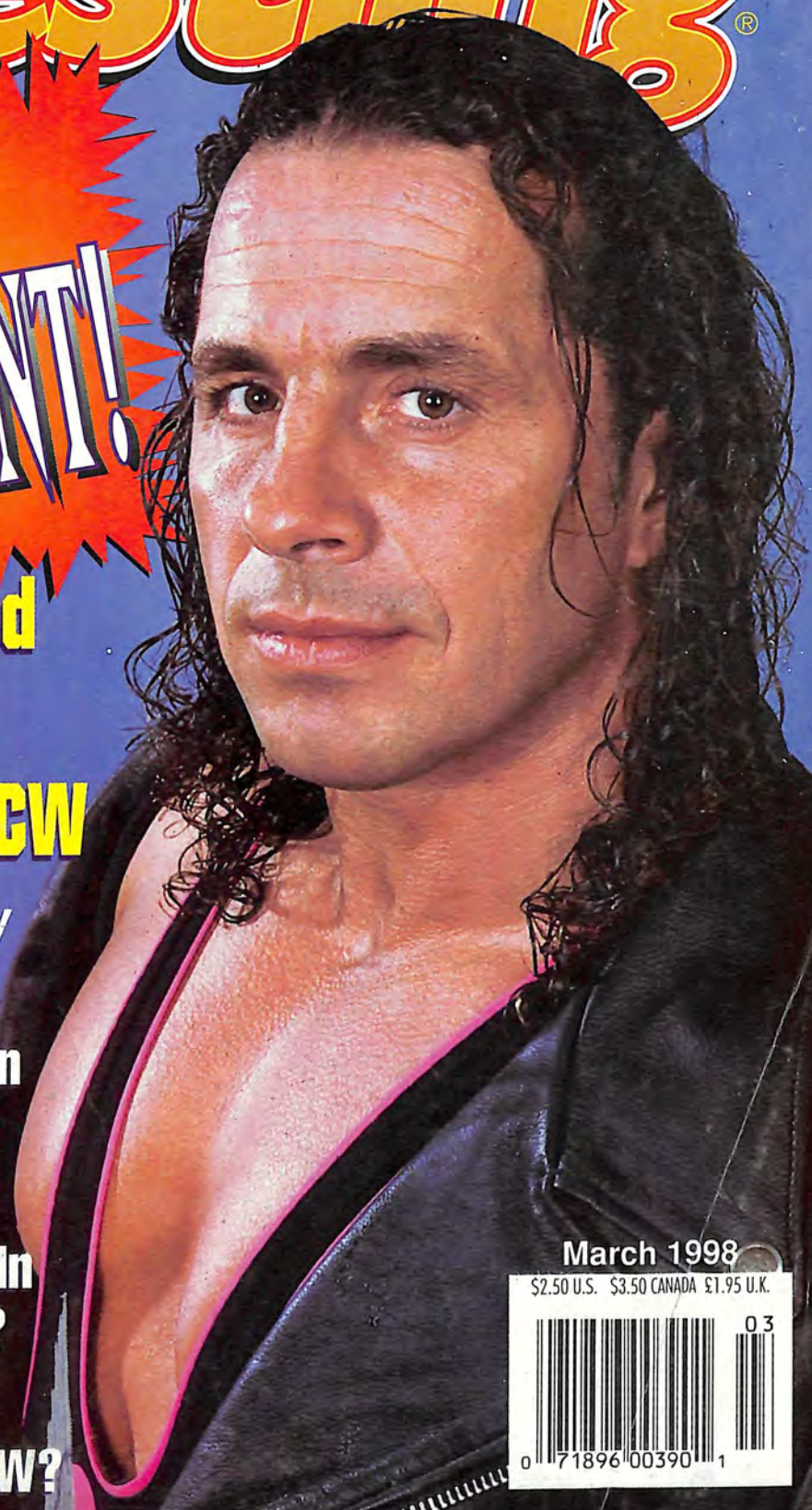
INSIDE WRESTLING

Inside Wrestling®

HART TRANSPLANT!

The Truth Behind Bret Hart's Defection To WCW

- Why Did Bret *Really* Leave The WWF?
- Was Vince McMahon Telling The Truth On *Raw*?
- Was Bret Justified In Slugging McMahon?
- Was Signing Bret A Smart Move By WCW?



March 1998

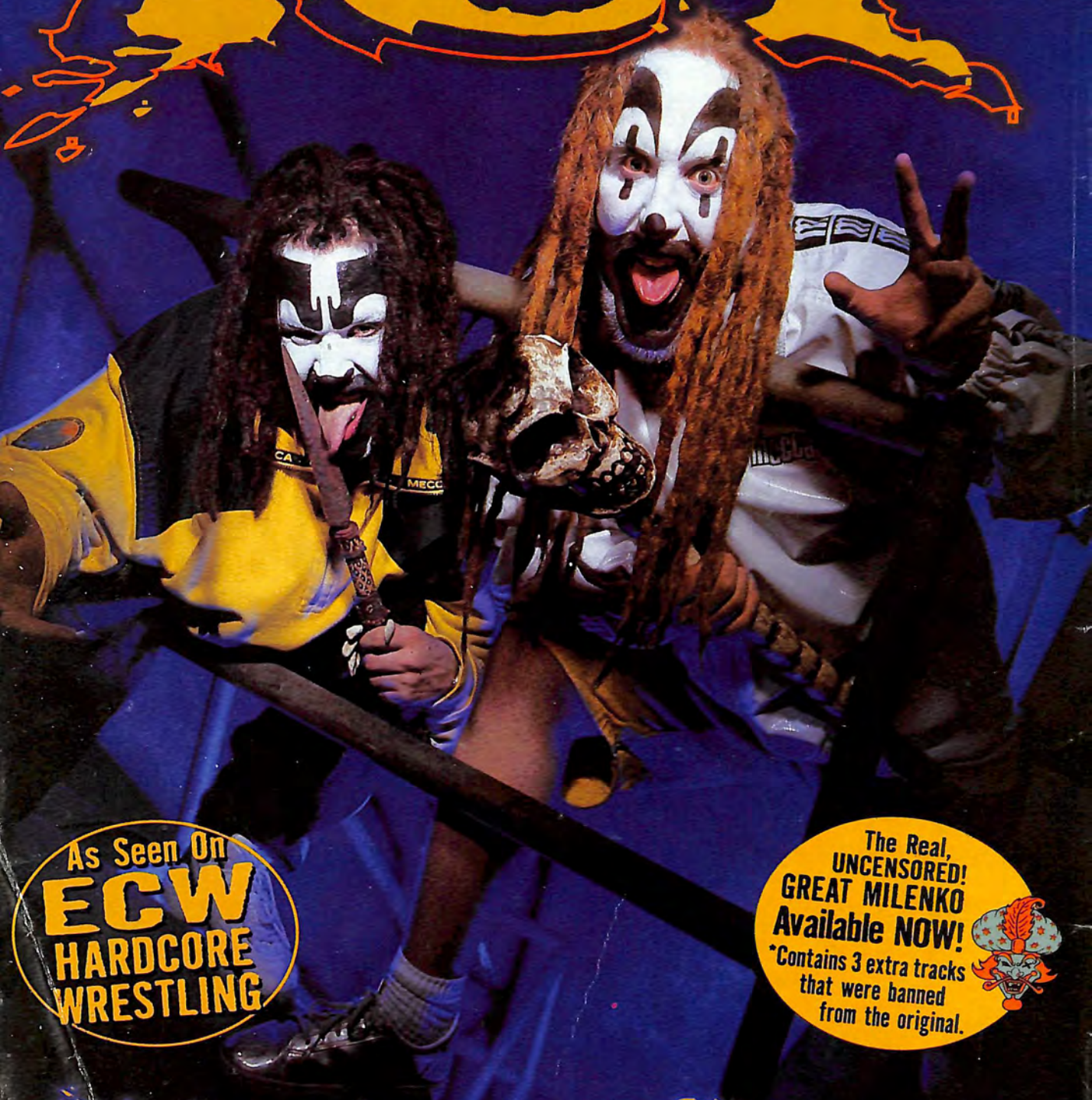
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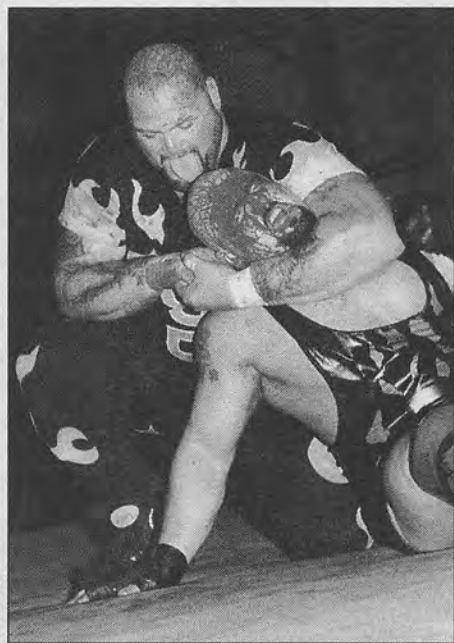
MARCH 1998

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February 17, 1998

Sincerely Yours

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SUPPORT FOR SHAWN

I'd like to know if I am the only wrestling fan who has noticed the accomplishments of Shawn Michaels. During his tenure in the WWF, "The Heartbreak Kid" has won three Intercontinental titles, two World tag team titles, and three World heavyweight titles. True, in order to win all those titles, Michaels had to lose a lot of matches, but the circumstances under which he lost often had nothing to do with his ability in the ring. In 1993, he was stripped of his I-C belt for his failure to meet certain contractual obligations. Then, at Survivor Series '94, Michaels and Diesel split up while they were tag team champs. In October 1995, Shawn was forced to forfeit the I-C belt due to injury. I could go continue, but the history

books say it all. Shawn has proven his greatness to me.

MICHAEL SEMINARA
Mohegan Lake, NY

NO RESPECT FOR VINCE

Mike Tenay and Tony Schiavone said it best when they said Bret Hart is not a quitter. Bret never gave up at Survivor Series. He never said, "I quit!" Vince McMahon just wanted to make Bret look bad before he went to WCW, and that's the bottom line. The only person I lost respect for at that pay-per-view was Vince McMahon. He deceived the fans of the WWF and made a mockery of the WWF championship.

The WWF has become nothing more than lewd gestures, swearing, and racist themes. Losing Bret was the final straw. I have lost all respect for the WWF and will no longer watch their programs. I will also never buy another WWF pay-per-view or any merchandise. The WWF has been a part of my life for nearly 20 years, but I cannot in good conscience continue to endorse a company that promotes, in my opinion, everything that is wrong with this world today. I will be following Bret to WCW and offering him my unconditional support and loyalty.

PAULA BRUNSON
Monroe, LA



Not many people who follow the WWF are big Shawn Michaels fans anymore. But reader Michael Seminara does have high praise for "The Heartbreak Kid."

SECOND CHANCE

In his second stint with the WWF, I believe Jeff Jarrett will become World champion and prove he's one of the biggest stars in wrestling. Jarrett's future was in jeopardy with WCW. His talent was being wasted by Debra McMichael and her ridiculous feud with her husband. He never had any chance to reach the upper echelon of WCW. Jarrett is too intelligent to be involved in situations that limit his chances for success. I hope he will once again establish himself as a superstar in the WWF. I have respect for Jarrett as a competitor and I think he has the desire to be the best.

LENNY TRIPODI
Kenilworth, NJ



J.J. Dillon is the chairman of the WCW Executive Committee. The other members? We still don't know. Reader Kelly Mayerson wishes the federation weren't so secretive about this.

WHO'S ON FIRST?

I find it hard to believe that no one knows who is on the single most important committee in WCW ("Who's On The WCW Executive Committee ... And Why Are They Making Such Stupid Decisions?" January 1998). It's like Charlie from *Charlie's Angels*, but at least that never-seen man made sensible decisions. Is this a *Wizard of Oz* syndrome? If we look behind the curtain, will we see David Crockett frantically pulling levers on a big, antiquated machine? Someone needs to find out for the sake of WCW.

KELLY MAYERSON
Seattle, WA

DUSTING AN ISSUE

I was absolutely appalled by what transpired during a recent interview with Dustin and Terri Runnels on *Raw Is War*. The tandem known to WWF fans as Goldust and Marlena was being interviewed by Jim Ross when a noticeably irritated Dustin waited impatiently for his wife to finish expressing her love and devotion before he unleashed a crushing,

profanity-laced diatribe against her. Goldust said he was tired of standing in her shadow the way he did with his father. I, for one, am getting sick of hearing Dustin's poor-boy story about how tough it was growing up as the son of Dusty Rhodes. Goldust hasn't been winning many matches lately, and he's simply looking for someone to blame again. The fact that he's now blaming his lovely wife for his slump just shows how much of a low life

coward he really is.

Goldust says he's found someone else (Luna Vachon), and I suggest that Marlena do the same, because she deserves better. I just wonder what Dustin will tell his daughter Dakota when she sees that interview someday.

DAVID MILLER
Oaktown, IN

HOGAN DESERVES MORE

When is Hulk Hogan going to get respect from the fans again? He is the only reason wrestling is so hot today. I admit that Hogan doesn't defend his title much anymore, but when he does put it on the line, he goes out there and gives everything he has. Hogan has beaten all the top stars in the sport—men like Andre the Giant, Lex Luger, Big Van Vader, and Ric Flair. I could go on forever, but I don't want to take up this whole column.

I can't say I was shocked when I read the letter by Paula Minor ("Lamenting Lex's Loss," Holiday 1997) stating that Hogan shouldn't have gotten the first shot after losing the title on *Nitro*. But what if

(Continued on page 52)

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REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

By Stu Saks

I'm happy with the way Senior Writer Harry Burkett handled the question: "Was Bret Hart justified in slugging Vince McMahon?" in our cover story beginning on page 34. Burkett noted that while Bret was justified in being angry, "... Hart was not justified in punching McMahon. For a wrestler in his prime (any wrestler, for that matter) to strike a 52-year-old promoter is unforgivable, no matter what the motivations were."

I can't help but place some of the blame for this situation squarely on the broad shoulders of the victim, however. For the past few months, for reasons unknown, McMahon has allowed himself to be bullied, insulted, and in one case physically assaulted by such men as Steve Austin, Faarooq, Shawn Michaels, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, and Jeff Jarrett. If he wanted to give the appearance of being thick-skinned and man enough to take verbal beatings, that's fine (though I still can't understand it). But when Austin hit him with a "Stone-Cold stunner" on national TV and didn't even receive as much as a fine, that sent a message to every WWF wrestler that the boss was fair game.

By the time McMahon was slugged by Hart, the "Hitman" was, for all intents and purposes, an employee of WCW. So, short of filing a lawsuit, the WWF head had little recourse. What McMahon should have done was let his employees know early on that he was not to be the subject of any kind of abuse, be it verbal or physical. A passive approach to volatile men who make a living beating people up is simply not the way to go.

Had McMahon reacted to Austin's attack in the same harsh manner that the Golden State Warriors and the NBA did when Latrell Sprewell attacked coach P.J. Carlesimo (the Warriors terminated his four-year, \$32-million contract and the NBA banned him for a year to make sure no other team picked him up), the mentality of the WWF wrestlers—Bret Hart included—might have eliminated physical contact as an option in communicating with the boss.

Was Bret Hart justified in his actions? Absolutely not. But in this case, McMahon has to share the blame.

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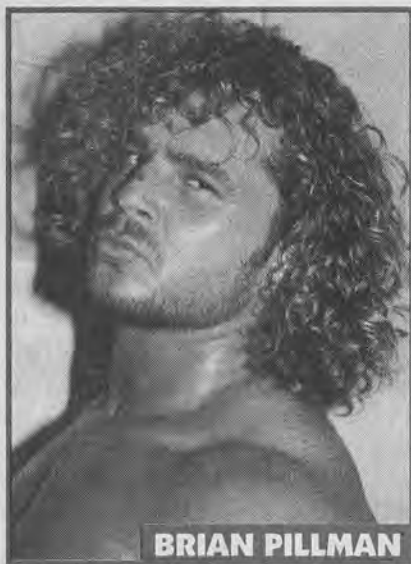
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NAMES MA

THE FINAL AUTOPSY report on **Brian Pillman**, who died in a Bloomington, Minnesota, hotel room on October 5, was completed in November by the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's office, and indicated that Pillman died of arteriosclerotic heart disease. I briefly spoke to Brian's widow, **Melanie**, shortly after the report was released, and she told me she's coping with her loss as best she can. For more on Melanie and her life with Brian, don't miss the exclusive hour-long interview she gave Senior Writer **Bryan Ethier**; it appears in the April 1998 issue of *PWI*, on sale January 27.



BRIAN PILLMAN

Now on to more news:

Just when you thought things couldn't get any stranger in the WWF, **Goldust** revealed that the "other woman" in his life is none other than **Luna Vachon**! We found this out on a recent edition of *Raw Is War* in which Goldust was wheeled down to ringside in a wheelchair by a nurse whose identity was concealed by her uniform.



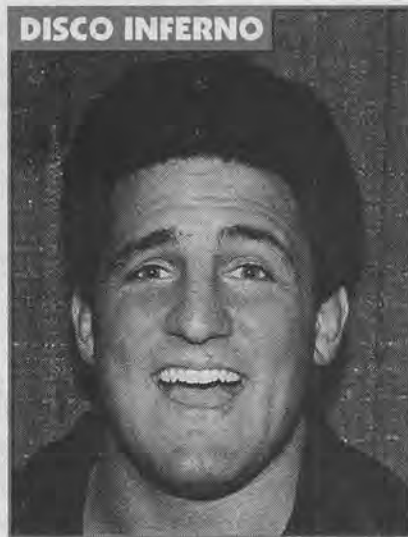
VADER

Vader confronted them, saying he believed that Goldust was faking his injury, and to prove his point, he punched 'Dust. Luna then tore off the nurse's uniform and threw rubbing alcohol in Vader's eyes. My goodness, this is what he left his wife for? It makes me sick just to look at them together. So what happens to the lovely married couple of Luna and **Vampire Warrior** now? "There's room in my heart for more than one man," Luna growled.

Another man who has had his share of women problems is **Disco Inferno**. He lost his WCW TV title partly because of two women. You can read all about "the worst night of Disco Inferno's life" on page 46, but what that story doesn't tell you is that our own **Brandi Mankiewicz** contributed to Disco's troubles that night.

When he got to the Spectrum in Philadelphia, which is less than 20 miles from our Ambler offices, that day, he asked me for her direct office number. Now, you must understand that Brandi, all editorial

objectivity aside, is a huge Disco Inferno fan and relishes her opportunities to speak to him. But this was a Monday and Brandi was in a mad rush to meet deadline on *PWI Weekly*. She spoke to Disco for less than minute, then said she really didn't have time to talk and hung up. So not only was he "abused, burned, and stripped" on November 3—he was also rejected! "No chick ever hangs up on the Disco Inferno—ever! She doesn't deserve me anymore. I'm through with her!" Disco said.

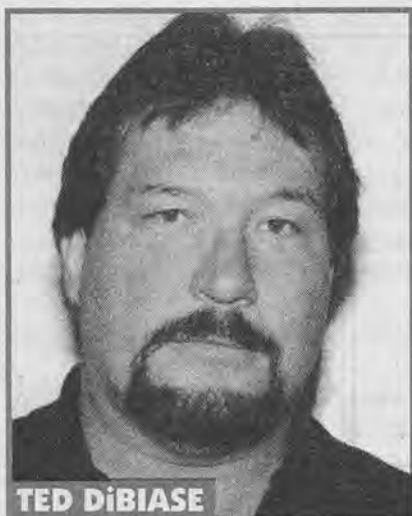


DISCO INFERNO

WWF World tag team champions **Jesse James** and **Billy Gunn** are convinced they destroyed what was left of **The Road Warriors'** legend when they beat them for the WWF tag belts. "This is our day, our era," Gunn said. "A few years ago, they were like us. They annihilated teams by doing whatever it took. We'll hit our opponents with whatever weapons we get our hands on. They try to do things the right way now, but it don't work. It's time they realized that retirement is a viable option" ... **Ted DiBiase**, manager of

KIN' NEWS

By Bill Apter



TED DiBIASE

WCW World tag team champions **Rick** and **Scott Steiner**, predicts that **Rick Rude** won't last long as an adviser to the NWO.

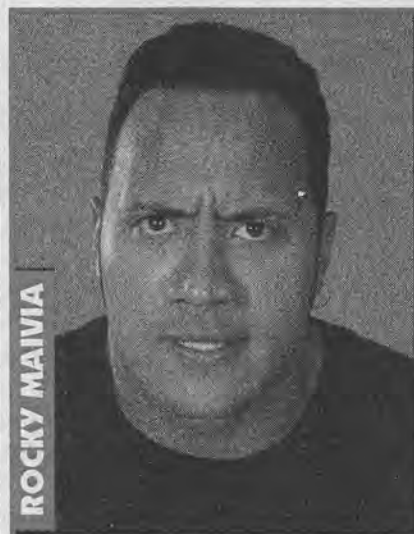
"Just look at his recent past," DiBiase pointed out. "In just a few months he went from ECW to the WWF to the NWO. If Rick, Scott, and I offered him more money than the NWO, which we won't do by the way, I'm sure he'd come with us. The guy is a very unstable personality who shows no loyalty, and he will be of zero benefit to the NWO. I'm surprised they don't see that" ... NWA 2000 American heritage champion **Steve Corino** is wrestling part-time in Puerto Rico, where he's using the nickname "Lightning Kid" and feuding with **Mohammed Hussein**, **Skull Von Krush**, and **Sean Morley**.

On a big night for title changes, NWA 2000 light heavyweight champion **Joey Matthews** beat **The Intruder** to capture the SCW light heavyweight belt, while NWA 2000 tag team champions **C.W. Anderson** and **Cueball Carmichael** added the SCW tag belts to their collection by beating **Death and Destruction**

... A possible power struggle is going on in the **Nation of Domination**, at least according to one member who spoke to me on condition of anonymity. "**Rocky Maivia** has got one of the biggest egos I've ever seen," he said. "We're on the verge of tossing him overboard."

Responded Rocky: "Whoever told you that is confusing ego with the drive to be the best and make sure you succeed. I needed the Nation of Domination desperately a few months ago. They helped me gain confidence. Now I feel if I were to leave, they would fall apart."

Maxx Steele recently defeated



ROCKY MAIVIA

arch-rival **Mark Pain** in a loser-leaves-town match in the North American Wrestling Alliance. However, **Kahn**, a new masked wrestler, has shown up at some NAWA cards, and many believe him to be Mark Pain! ... The next time you hear a broadcaster calling a Lucha Libre match and he uses the word huracanrana, remember that when translated into English, it literally means "hurricane frog." (Isn't that useful information?) ... **Marcus**

Bagwell is glad his former tag team partner **Scotty Riggs** has gone on to join **Raven's** gang. "He's finally



SCOTTY RIGGS

become a useful member of society," Bagwell said. "I might actually start to like the guy again."

After teaming with **Bobby Duncum Jr.** in Japan a few times, veteran **Stan Hansen** compared the young man very favorably to his father, **Bobby Sr.** "I also teamed with his old man," Hansen said, "and I never thought I'd say this, but the kid has his dad beat by a mile. You got a future champion here. He's mean, he's got the killer instinct, and he never gets down on himself. He's a lot like me, so you know he's gonna be a champion!" Duncum tells us that he always had a certain amount of meanness in him, but that wrestling in ECW brought it out in him ... **The Blackjacks**, **Barry Windham** and **Justin Bradshaw** are teaming with "**Dr. Death**" **Steve Williams** in six-man competition in All-Japan.

That's all for now. I'll see you at the matches! □

IF YOUR WRESTLING travel plans include a trip to Tennessee to watch some USWA action, you'd better change your plans. But don't change your itinerary. There's still wrestling all over Tennessee. It's just not the old USWA. It's the new Music City Wrestling.

Strange name for a federation. No doubt about it. This whole mix of music and wrestling started about 13 years ago and has never stopped, even though it should have stopped about 13 years ago. But here's the thing: Music City Wrestling isn't rock 'n' wrestling. It can be a little bit of country music 'n' wrestling at times, because Billy Joe Travis, one of the regular competitors there, has this notion that

ON THE ROAD

With Dave Lenker

he's a great country singer.

He isn't.

The bottom line is that this new federation is just wrestling with an unusual name.

Music City Wrestling has such stars as Colorado Kid, who once beat Jerry Lawler for the USWA heavyweight title, Doug Gilbert, PG-13, Flash Flanagan, Thrillbilly, The Centerfolds, Steven Dunn, and Frenchy Riviera. They run several shows a week, and every Saturday night you can find them at the Fairgrounds Sports Arena in Nashville, which happens to be the same place where the USWA ran its Saturday night cards.

Think of it as the same old great wrestling with a new name.

So what do the wrestlers think about this?

"Who cares about the name?" Doug Gilbert said. "Their checks clear and the wrestling's good. That's all I ask."

Gilbert was a mere spectator when he said this, because he had been sidelined with an injury. That's another thing you should know about Music City Wrestling. Although it sounds a tad lame, it's tough. There are injuries. There's a lot of blood and quite a few broken bones. You get crazy, out-of-control wrestlers screaming uncontrollably at each other, and referees who don't know what the heck they're doing.

In other words, it's just like all other wrestling.

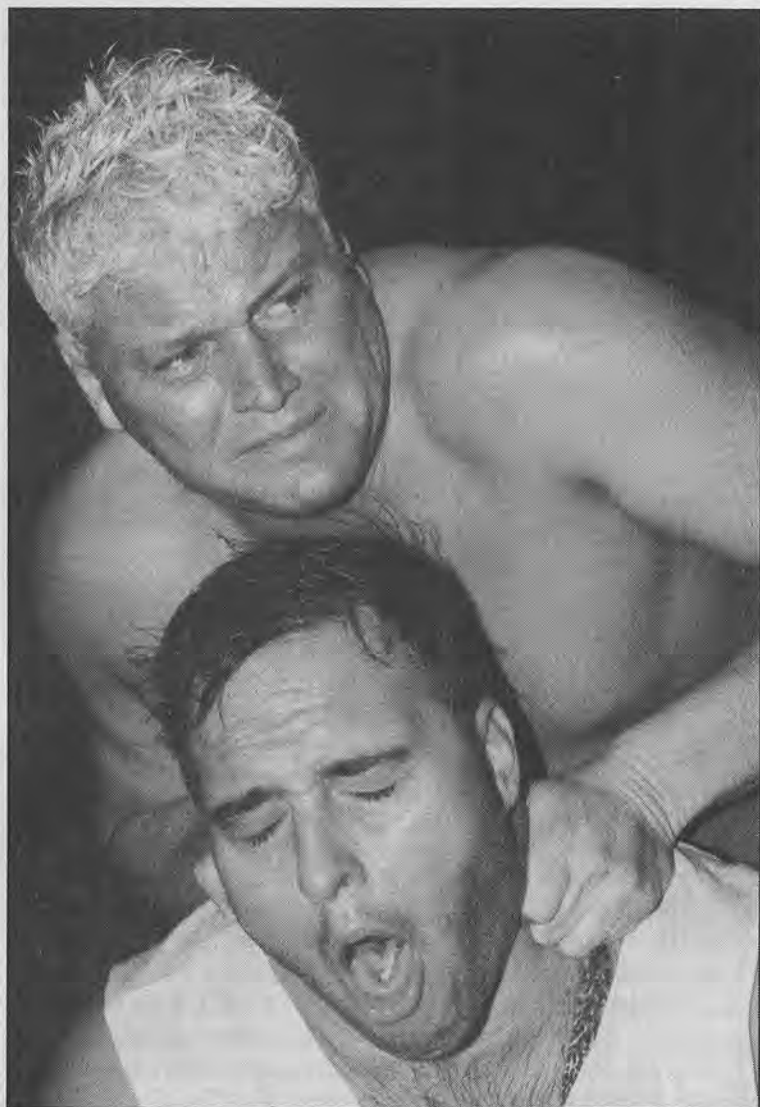
The difference, however, is that these guys are fighting for the lifeblood of wrestling in Tennessee, a state that has come upon hard times wrestling wise over the past few years. Smoky Mountain is dead. The USWA is just about dead. Sure, there are plenty of other smaller independents around, but Tennessee, once a hotbed of wrestling, is cooling off rapidly.

Tennessee is one of the last remaining hotbeds of wrestling because it's a state with many small towns connected in a triangle by three large cities.

The way a lot of people see it, if independent wrestling fails in Tennessee, the domino effect will eventually crush everyone.

"We try harder here," said Debbie Combs, who on a recent card defeated Candi Devine in a battle of two long-time stars. "We know what's at stake. We're try-

(Continued on page 54)



When he's not pretending he's a good country singer at a Music City Wrestling card, you're likely to see him choking someone such as Doug Gilbert. Music City has quickly become one of the sport's more visible independent promotions.

Bloodbaths, Brawls and Women

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ECW TV 16 Sandman vs. Cactus Jack (3 matches), Raven vs. Dreamer, Melanie vs. Guerrero, Benoit and Melanie vs. Mikey and Norman Smiley, Raven and Richards vs. Dreamer and Mikey.

ECW TV 17 Sandman vs. Cactus (Barbed Wire Match), Sandman vs. Shane Douglas, Beulah vs. Luna Vachon, Public Enemy vs. Pitbulls, and the ECW debut of the Gangstas.

ECW TV 18 Raven and Richards beating Public Enemy for the Tag Titles, Taz vs. 2 Cold Scorpio, Taz and Eddy Guerrero vs. Melanie and Scorpio (twice), Cactus and Dreamer and Pitbulls vs. Raven and Richards and Dudley. Cactus and Melanie and Scorpio vs. Steiner and Guerrero, Public Enemy vs. Gangstas.

ECW TV 20 Melanie vs. Guerrero (Final ECW Match), Francine vs. Beulah (Cat Fight), Raven and Richards vs. Pitbulls, Steiners vs. Scorpio and Benoit, Raven and Richards vs. Pitbulls (Double Dog Collar Match).

ECW TV 21 Steiner and Taz vs. Eliminators and Scorpio, Steve Austin imitating Hulk Hogan, Rey Misterio Jr. Vs. Psicosis (twice), Public Enemy and Mikey vs. Sandman and Scorpio and New Jack (Cage Match).

ECW TV 22 Public Enemy vs. Gangstas, Taz and Rick Steiners vs. Eliminators. Cactus vs. Dreamer, Misterio Jr. and Konnan vs. LaParka and Psicosis, Sandman vs. Mikey.

ECW TV 23 Cactus and Raven vs. Dreamer and Funk, Heavenly Bodies debut in ECW, Konnan vs. Jason, Mikey vs. Misterio Jr., Steve Austin vs. Mikey (twice), Sabu return to ECW.

ECW TV 24 Steve Austin and Mikey and Sandman (3 way dance), Misterio Jr. Vs. Psicosis (Mexican Death Match), Raven vs. Dreamer, Public Enemy vs. Heavenly Bodies, Shane Douglas returns to ECW.

ECW TV 25 Eliminators vs. 911 and Rey Misterio Jr., Konnan vs. Sandman (Bloodbath), Sabu vs. Steve Richards, Rob Van Dam vs. Axl Rotten, Scorpio vs. Mikey, Sabu vs. Van Dam, Misterio Jr. vs. Juventud Guerrera, Headhunters return, Sandman vs. Raven.

ECW TV 26 Raven and Richards vs. Dreamer and Douglas, Brian Pillman debuts in ECW. Headhunters vs. Bruise Brothers, Raven vs. Douglas (Pillman runs in). Sabu vs. Scorpio, Eliminators and Richards vs. Pitbulls and Francine (Triple Dog Collar Match).

ECW TV 27 Headhunters vs. Gangstas, Cactus vs. Chris Jericho, Misterio Jr. vs. Guerrero (2 matches), Cactus vs. Mikey (Cactus' last ECW match). Gangstas - Eliminators Brawl)

ECW TV 28 Raven and Bruise Brothers vs. Dreamer, Douglas and Sandman. Sabu vs. Mikey, Taz vs. Jericho, Pitbulls and Dreamer vs. Bruises and Lee, Dreamer vs. Lee, Raven vs. Douglas.

ECW TV 29 Sabu vs. VanDam, Douglas vs. Scorpio, Taz vs. Scorpio, Jericho vs. Mikey, Jericho vs. Scorpio, Eliminators and Lee vs. Dreamer and Gangstas.

ECW TV 30 Brian Lee and Bruise Brothers vs. Dreamer and Pitbulls, Raven vs. Pitbull 2, VanDam vs. Mikey, Douglas vs. Pitbull 2, Sandman vs. Richards.

ECW TV 31 Jericho vs. Pitbull #2, Dreamer vs. Lee (Weapons Match), Gangstas vs. Eliminators, Sabu vs. VanDam, Eliminators vs. Sabu and Mikey, Jerico vs. Douglas vs. Pitbull #2 vs. Scorpio (4 Way Dance).

ECW TV 32 Sabu vs. Louie Spicolli, Sandman vs. Richards, Eliminators vs. Okano and Yamada, Dreamer vs. Raven from Japan, Shane Douglas vs. Pitbull #2, and a 4-way dance for the Tag Titles.

ECW TV 33 Doug urnas vs. VanDam, Taz vs. Dreamer, Lee vs. Terry Gordy (Bad Street Match), Dudley vs. Axl and D-von Dudley.

ECW TV 34 Sabu and VanDam vs. Furnas and Kroffat (30 minute draw) Taz vs. Johnny Smith, Eliminators and Lee vs. Dreamer and Gordy and Steve Williams, Douglas vs. Pitbull #2, Lee and Richards vs. Dreamer and Sandman (Ultimate Jeopardy).

ECW TV 35 Jericho vs. Scorpio, Eliminators vs. Gangstas, Taz vs. Guido (Shoot Fight), Sandman vs. Scorpio, Douglas vs. Dreamer, Sabu and VanDam vs. Kroffat and Furnas.

ECW TV 36 ECW Royal Rumble, Douglas and Francine vs. Dreamer and Beulah, Taz vs. VanDam, Raven vs. Mikey, Raven v. Sandman, Candito vs. VanDam.

ECW TV 37 Gangstas vs. Morton and Rich, Raven vs. Sandman (Texas Death Match), Raven vs. Sandman (Hair vs. Belt), Raven vs. Steve Williams, Funk vs. Brian Lee.

ECW TV 38 Funk vs. Tommy Rich, Sabu and VanDam vs. Eliminators (Tables and Ladders), Dudley vs. Gangstas, Funk and Dreamer vs. Lee and Raven, Lance Storm vs. Balls Mahoney.

ECW TV 39 Taz vs. VanDam, Funk vs. Brian Lee, Balls vs. Sandman (Twice), Funk vs. Axl Rotten, Sabu vs. Spike Dudley, Raven and Shane vs. Dreamer and Funk, Great Sasuke and Hamada and nanina vs Taka and Men's Tech and Dick Togo (Michinoku Pro G-Man).

ECW TV 40 Preview of "Barely Legal", Eliminators vs. Dudley vs. Gangstas (3 Way Dance), Video clips of "Barely Legal", Rob Van Dam vs. Pitbull #2, and the Evolution of Mr. Monday Night.

ECW TV 41 Gangstas vs. Dudley vs. Eliminators (3 Way Dance), Bam Bam Bigelows return to ECW, Rude's debut as TV commentator, Sabu and Van Dam vs. Taz and Candito, Dreamer vs. Spicolli, Sandman vs. Balls, Raven and Richards vs. Funk and Dreamer.

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Behind the Dressing Room Door

by David Rosenbaum

HERE'S WHAT MY mother used to tell me. In fact, here's what my mother still tells me:

Once a cheat, always a cheat. Remember that, Luna Vachon, in your dealings—relationship, as it were—with Goldust.

Without getting into the sleazy details, Marlena was serving out her 30-day sentence with Brian Pillman several months back—Pillman had won the services of Marlena from Goldust in September—when Pillman died. Shortly afterward, Goldust admitted to having had a relationship with a woman while Marlena was away. Actually, he was proud of it. He said he had found someone who understood him and let him be who he really wanted to be. In other words, he had found someone who was everything Marlena wasn't.

Other thing my mother told me: When the cat's away, the mice play.

So the cat, Marlena, was away, and the mouse, Goldust, played. Somehow, I have hard

time thinking of Goldust as a mouse, but who am I to change age-old sayings? It turned out that Goldust's new lady wasn't much of a lady at all. She was Luna Vachon, who you and I know as that strange-looking woman with the large chest, skimpy leather outfits (much too skimpy for my tastes), multicolored scalp, and nasty voice.

If Luna Vachon were the last woman left in a nightclub on a Saturday night, you would not say, "Let's dance."

In fact, you would not want to be in the kinds of nightclubs that Luna Vachon frequents. This woman is the daughter of Mad Dog Vachon. She has the genes for craziness. And she's married to a man named Vampire Warrior.

Anyway, Goldust ended up leaving Marlena for Luna. Big deal. One weirdo for another. Nothing against weirdoes, of course, but these two women are really weird, and so is their man. Goldust is the weirdest of the weird.

My point? Well, I don't have a point. The only reason I'm writing this column is that Dave Lenker suggested I dig into this Goldust-



The very strange Luna Vachon (above) has apparently destroyed the relationship of a very strange couple, Goldust and Marlena (bottom). The only one of the three Dave Rosenbaum feels sympathy for is Goldust.

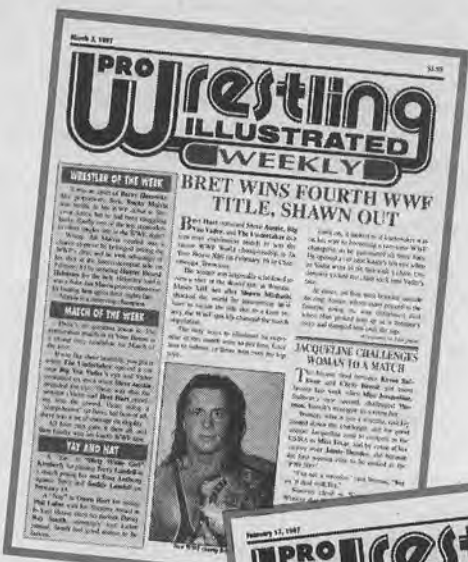
Marlena-Luna triangle. But digging would probably mean spending time with them, observing them, and trying to talk to them.

Ugh! Just the idea of Goldust,
(Continued on page 55)



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the Insider

by Brandi Mankiewicz

(The opinions expressed in this column are those of Brandi Mankiewicz alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else on the staff of this magazine.)

BEFORE I START, allow me to acknowledge one of my subjects who went out of his way to ensure that your

"Queen" received her proper due on a recent edition of *WCW Monday Nitro*. Andy Fleming of Memphis, Tennessee, brandished a "Long Live Queen Brandi" sign for the world to see. I guess you could say that I have received my proper exposure. What lengths you Brandi-files will go to in an effort to please your monarch. You served me well, peasant



I think it's safe to say we won't be seeing Rick Rude having a face-to-face with Vinnie Mac inside a WWF ring again anytime soon. That is unless Rude shocks us all again.

Fleming. But can the rest of you subjects do any better?

I never thought I would see the day. Wrestlers moving around more than ever before. Live television is now more the rule than the exception. WCW runs a live Monday night show every week, while the WWF employs the part-time approach: live one week, taped the next. So it was inevitable. For the first time, one man appeared in both promotions on one historic Monday night.

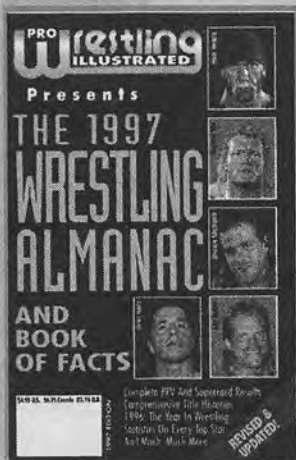
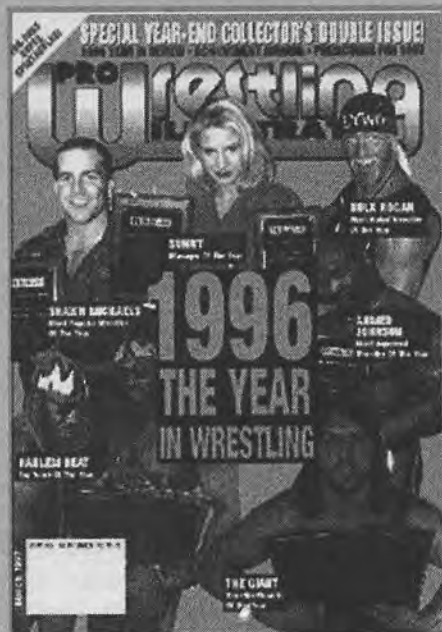
A few minutes after 8 p.m. on this night (7 p.m. Central), the New World Order gave us another shocker by showing off its latest acquisition: "Ravishing" Rick Rude, replete in his insurance man garb, strolled to the WCW ring that already held his new NWO cohorts. It was such a surprising sight that I almost didn't notice it. *Oh, there's Rick Rude*, I thought before the significance sunk in. For a second I forgot which show I was watching. *Wait, he's supposed to be in the WWF.*

Rude had obviously jumped. Bischoff's big money talked, and Rude walked right out of the WWF. He insulted both Shawn Michaels and Vince McMahon. In a nutshell, he tried to denigrate DeGeneration X, the very clique of which he had been a part a week earlier.

About one hour later on *Monday Night Raw* (or whatever derivation of *War* they're calling it now), DeGeneration X entered a WWF ring, with—you guessed it—Rick Rude announcing them. Not bad. Let's see David Copperfield pull that one off and live to tell about it. Making the Statue of Liberty disappear? Kid's stuff compared to Houdini Rude.

Now I know that the fact that one show was live and the other taped six nights earlier allows a wrestler to do such a thing. But it was almost unprecedented for a wrestler to pull it off in this day and

(Continued on page 56)



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ON Assignment

By Liz Hunter

FORGIVE ME IF I seem a little down this month. I can't help it. I've been covering wrestling for a long time—longer than I'd like to admit—but it's never easy to watch any promotion that once flourished die right in front of your eyes. But it happened this fall with the Memphis-based United States Wrestling Association, which has ceased running cards.

Since the mid-1980s national

expansion of the WWF, various smaller federations have been left in its multimillion-dollar dust. One after another, they became part of wrestling history. Even the almighty American Wrestling Association died a slow and ugly death before ceasing to exist in 1990. Equate that with what's happening today. Imagine the WWF or WCW shutting down. Unlikely? Ask Verne Gagne.

Remember Smoky Mountain

Wrestling? I once thought it had the potential to expand beyond a few Southern states. I even gave it a chance of receiving world title status in this magazine someday. But it folded in 1995 after less than four years of operation.

In recent years, the monster known as the WWF has lost some of its potency. Rival WCW gained more power as Ted Turner became more generous with his checkbook. Independent promotions like ECW and, for a while, SMW, gained bigger followings. It looked for a while like wrestling might become more of a regional sport again. Heck, the WWF even had working arrangements with promotions much smaller than it. If you can't destroy them, join forces with them.

Then, almost out of nowhere, came the demise of the USWA. It's been a while since the untimely loss, but the emptiness is starting to sink in as I remember better days—days when I looked forward to weekly Monday night cards at Memphis' Mid-South Coliseum.

You see, a lawsuit was filed this summer in which Mark Selker, who bought 50 percent of the company from Jerry Lawler, contended that Lawler and Larry Burton, who had previously bought the other 50 percent from Lawler, inflated the value of the company during the sale. While the mess was being sorted out (the suit was ultimately dropped in November), the USWA essentially shut down. For all intents and purposes, it died.

(Continued on page 57)

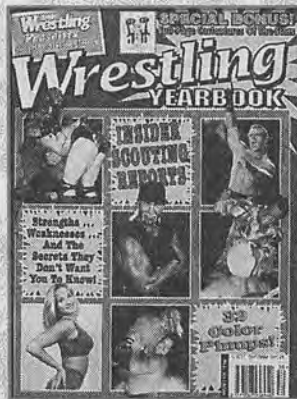


Jerry Lawler has had a lot of bloody wars with a lot of tough men over the years in Memphis, but Liz Hunter will never forget some of the battles he had with Terry Funk years ago.

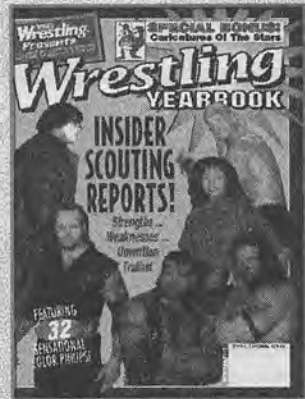
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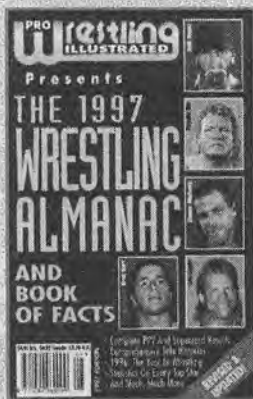
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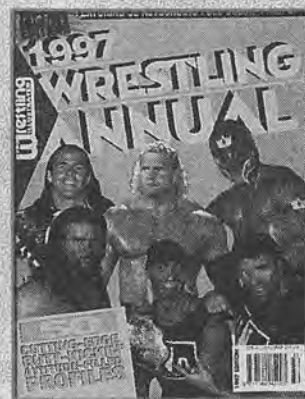
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INSIDE WRESTLING CAPSULE PROFILE 264

SGT. SLAUGHTER

FOR AN OLD Marine who made his debut more than a quarter-century ago, Sgt. Slaughter looked pretty good against Hunter Hearst Helmsley at the DeGeneration X pay-per-view, didn't he? ... The WWF commissioner, a 6'3", 310-pound native of Parris Island, South Carolina, will turn 50 next year, but he still has a few good fights left in him (*"Marines never forget how to fight"*) ... Former drill instructor was mainly a fan favorite during the first few years of his career, then started breaking rules in earnest in 1977, mostly in the Mid-Atlantic area ... Had a stint in the WWF in the early-1980s in which he nearly unseated Bob Backlund as World champion ... Defeated Rick Steamboat for the first of his two NWA U.S. titles in October 1981 (*"An appropriate title for me to win"*) ... Won his only NWA World tag team title with Don Kernodle, a member of his Cobra Corps, in 1982 ... Returned to the WWF in 1983 and got involved in one of the most memorable feuds in federation history. As Slaughter was returning to the dressing room following a televised match, Iran's Iron Sheik refused to move out of his way (*"I still can't stand the sight of him"*) ... That one minor incident started a major

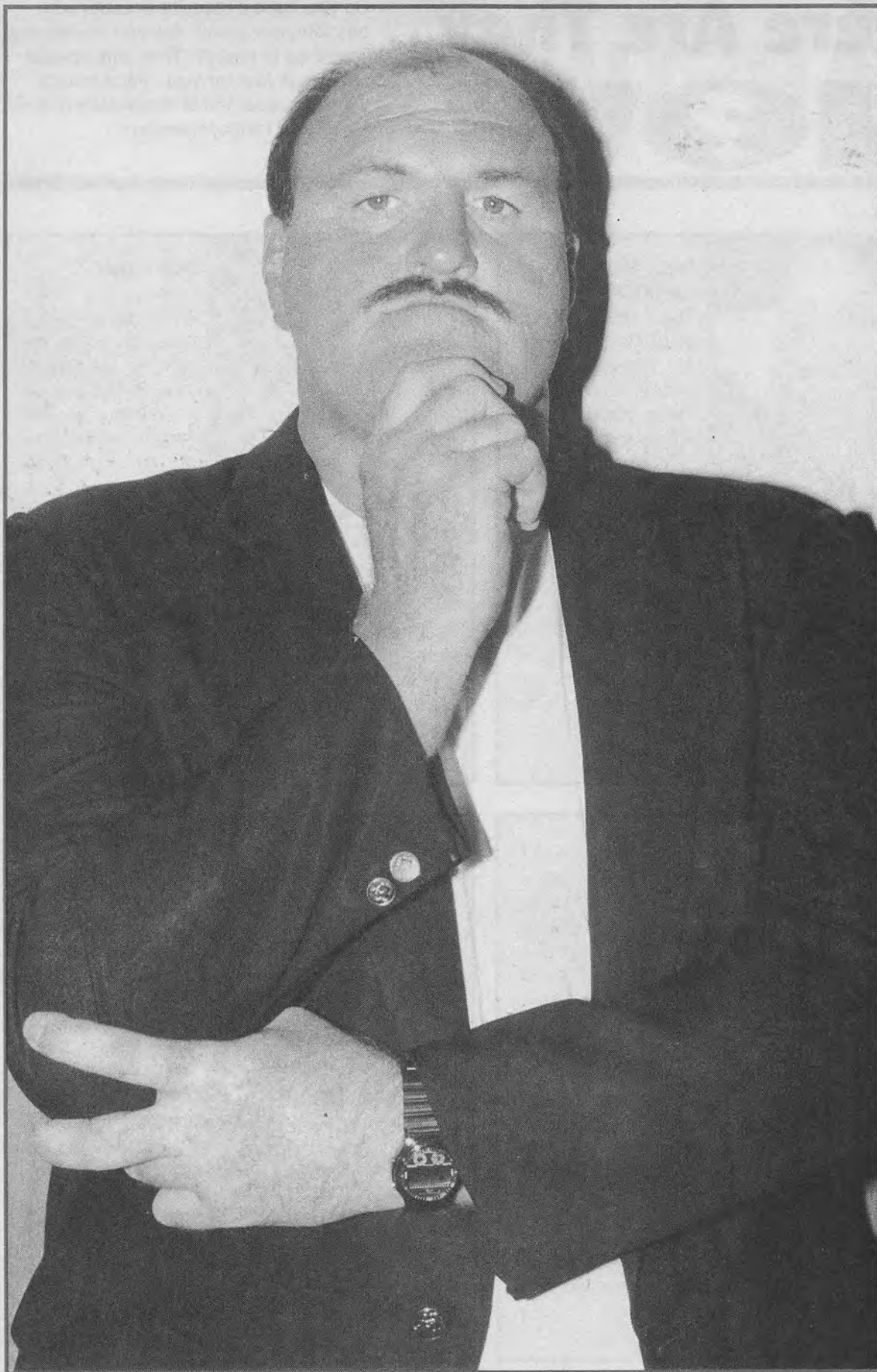
feud ... American fans took to Slaughter like they never had before as he pounded Sheik in many bloody matches ... Was voted Inspirational Wrestler of the Year for 1984 by *PWI* readers (*"People inspired me back then"*) ... After feuding with Russia's Nikolai Volkoff, he left the WWF for



Once Sgt. Slaughter locks on that cobra clutch of his, he's not likely to let go until the referee has called for the bell and awarded him the match. It's a devastating hold.

Pro Wrestling U.S.A. ... Received several shots at Ric Flair's NWA World title ... Had several stints in the AWA in the mid- and late-1980s and won the Americas title from Larry Zbyszko in 1985 ... Also feuded with notorious anti-

Americans such as Col. DeBeers, Soldat Ustinov, and Teijho Khan (*"If you were a wrestler and said bad things about this country, you had to deal with me"*) ... Spent several years wrestling in smaller federations before returning to the WWF once again ... That's where he did the unthinkable—he betrayed the country he had spent most of his life defending ... Under the guidance of Iraq's Gen. Adnan, he wrestled as a rulebreaker during the Persian Gulf War in 1991 and won the WWF World title from The Ultimate Warrior at the Royal Rumble (*"I'm not proud of that part of my life"*) ... Two months later, however, he lost the belt to Hulk Hogan ... Less than a year after that happened, he was back to being a patriotic American again (*"I just lost my head for a while there"*) ... Wrestled on the independent circuit for a few years after leaving the WWF, gradually decreasing his schedule ... Competed for a while for the now-defunct American Wrestling Federation ... Took the job as WWF commissioner in the summer of 1997 and soon got into a dispute with The Hart Foundation (*"They don't respect this country"*) ... Has had his problems with DeGeneration X recently and nearly beat Helmsley in that boot camp match (*"To call them maggots is an insult to maggots everywhere"*). □



SGT. SLAUGHTER

Where Are They NOW

Do you have a favorite wrestler who has left your area? Are you wondering where he is today? Then this special column is just for you. Each month we will update the whereabouts of four current or former wrestlers



COL. ROB PARKER

The former manager of Harlem Heat, Arn Anderson, and Steve Austin, among others, is living at his mansion in Montgomery, Alabama, where he is doing a different kind of managing. "I manage horses," he says. "Yup, Colonel's got a few

dozen top fillies that have taken top places in shows in the U.S. and England. What's nice is your horses, unlike your wrestlers, always listen to you." Parker said he might look to return to wrestling sometime in 1998.



JOE GOMEZ

The young man who had been feuding with his former tag team partner The Renegade in WCW has left the organization and is now competing part-time in several Florida independents. Most of the rest of the time you'll find him at either a

restaurant called Sushi on Seventh or a pub called Cherry's, two Tampa establishments he owns and manages. "I love wrestling, but I also want to get ahead in the business world," Gomez says, "so I'm mixing my love for both."



SAM STEAMBOAT

Once a mainstay in the Carolinas, Canada, and Hawaii, Steamboat (no relation to Rick or Vic) had brutal feuds with Rip Hawk, Swede Hanson, and The Great Mortier in his day. Today, Sam is living in his native Hawaii, where he is a competitive boating

instructor. "I have no regrets about my career," he said. "I wouldn't change anything about my days as a wrestler. It was a good life, and even today fans like to talk to me about all those good times. I love that!"



KIMONA

The Hawaiian beauty who once served as a valet to Raven and his cohorts in ECW is now working part-time as a valet in several East Coast independents; she's also doing some modeling and exotic dancing in New Jersey.

"I've gotten a bunch of offers from several wrestlers to work in their corner full-time," Kimona told us. "Right now, my modeling and dancing assignments have me so busy that I really don't know when I'll be able to take them up on their offers."

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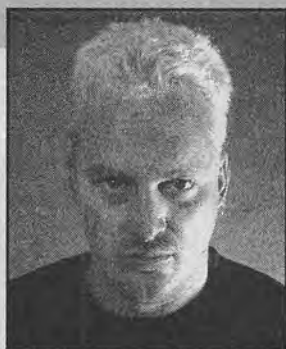
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NEWS FROM THE

MONACA, PA
BY JIM FINCH



SABU
VS.
THE SANDMAN



Where else but on an ECW pay-per-view would the use of tables and ladders be encouraged? Sabu used plenty of both to defeat The Sandman at November to Remember. Sabu's onslaught started before the bell as he dove onto Sandman. The two brawled both in and out of the ring, using everything at their disposal, including a fork, which Sabu used to stab Sandman. Sabu missed hitting with a fireball, but later followed up with an Arabian facebuster on a ladder to set up the pinfall.

OTHER BOUTS: Chris Candido & Lance Storm beat Tommy Rogers & Jerry Lynn ... Mikey Whipwreck defeated Justin Credible ... ECW TV champ Taz beat Pit Bull II ... ECW tag team champs Tracey Smothers & Little Guido won a four-way match against New Jack & John Kronus, Buh Buh Ray & D-Von Dudley, and Axl Rotten & B. Mahoney ... Tommy Dreamer and Rob Van Dam wrestled to a no-contest ... Shane Douglas defeated ECW heavy-weight champ Bam Bam Bigelow to win the title.

NASHVILLE, TN
BY TIMOTHY A. WALKER



FLASH FLANAGAN
VS.
WOLFIE D



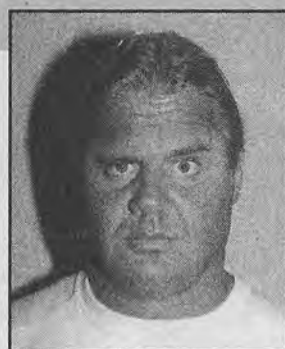
This falls-count-anywhere match was the first bout between former partners Flash Flanagan and Wolfie D, and both took the stipulation literally, spending most of the match outside the ring. At one point, they battled their way to the balcony and tried to push each other over the edge. Wolfie nailed Flash with a hubcap, bloodying him, then backdropped him in the stairwell to the landing about six feet below and again on the steps. Later, Flash hit a moonsault for a two-count. But when he climbed to the top rope again, Wolfie got up, dragged him down by the hair, smashed his head into a chair, and got the pin.

OTHER BOUTS: Thrillbilly beat Grungeboy Rat ... Bobby Bronz beat Grungeboy Flea ... Nick Dinsmore defeated Frenchy Riviera ... Colorado Kid & Shane Eden beat Billy Travis & Trailer Park Trash ... Kenny & John Arden defeated The Shooting Stars.

AUBURN HILLS, MI
BY JOSH SHERNOFF



RIC FLAIR
VS.
CURT HENNIG

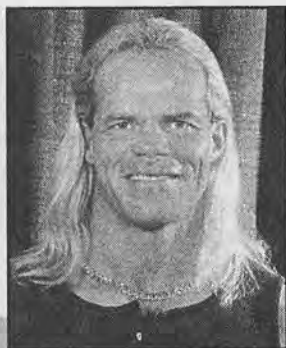


WCW U.S. champion Hennig pinned Flair to retain the title in their no-disqualification match at the World War III pay-per-view. Early on, Hennig choked Flair with a TV camera cable, but Flair retaliated by coming off the top rope and nailing Hennig with a forearm to the head, then chopping at him unmercifully. Later, Hennig attacked Flair's legs, but Flair had enough power to lock on a figure-four anyway. In the end, Hennig hit the "Nature Boy" with the U.S. belt while he was in the figure-four and got gain the pin.

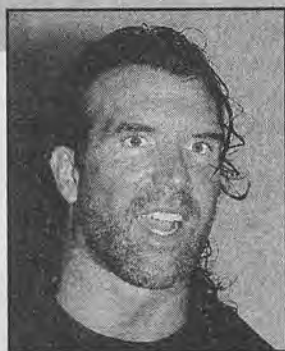
OTHER BOUTS: Meng & The Barbarian beat Glacier & Ernest Miller ... WCW TV champ Perry Saturn beat Disco Inferno ... Yuji Nagata pinned Ultimo Dragon ... WCW World tag team champs Rick & Scott Steiner beat Dave Taylor & Steven Regal ... Raven beat Scotty Riggs in a no-disqualification match ... Steve McMichael pinned Alex Wright ... WCW cruiserweight champ Eddy Guerrero beat Rey Mysterio Jr. ... Scott Hall won a 60-man battle royal.

WRESTLING CAPITALS

**RICHMOND, VA
BY MARIA RUIS**



**LEX LUGER
VS.
SCOTT HALL**



Luger scored another victory over the NWO by defeating Hall by submission to the "torture rack" despite the fact that the majority of the crowd was pro-NWO. The lack of fan support didn't deter Luger from gaining an early advantage. He and Hall fought an even and surprisingly clean match for the most part, but Luger's strength won out. With Hall down, he signalled for the "rack" and almost had him up, but referee Nick Patrick grabbed Hall's legs. As Luger "racked" Patrick, Hall nailed Luger. Hall then "racked" Hall. Referee Randy Anderson ran in to call and ruled that Hall had submitted.

OTHER BOUTS: Dave Finlay pinned Pez Whatley ... Ernest Miller pinned Yuji Nagata ... Steven Regal beat Bobby Walker ... Ray Traylor pinned Dave Taylor ... World tag team champs Rick & Scott Steiner beat Wrath & Mortis ... Chris Benoit beat U.S. champ Curt Hennig in a non-title match.

**POUGHKEEPSIE, NY
BY SAL MYERS**



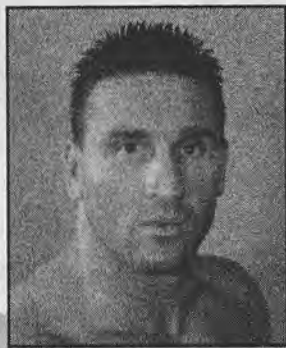
**TOMMY DREAMER
VS.
ROB VAN DAM**



Even a badly injured ankle couldn't stop Tommy Dreamer from defending ECW against WWF-loving Rob Van Dam. Dreamer pinned "Mr. Monday Night" at the Mid-Hudson Civic Center, a building the WWF used to use for TV tapings. Sabu and Van Dam attacked Dreamer at the outset as Tommy deemed the arena "ECW country." The two even wrapped Dreamer in a WWF banner, but The Sandman ran in to even the score. This gave Dreamer the opportunity to pin a distracted Van Dam.

OTHER BOUTS: Tommy Rogers & Jerry Lynn beat Paul Diamond & Roadkill ... Justin Credible beat Mikey Whipwreck ... ECW TV champ Taz defeated Spike Dudley ... Shane Douglas beat Chris Chetti ... ECW tag team champs Tracey Smothers & Little Guido won a four-way dance over Buh Buh Ray & D-Von Dudley, Axl Rotten & B. Mahoney, and New Jack & John Kronus ... Heavyweight champ Bam Bam Bigelow beat Chris Candido ... Sabu beat The Sandman.

**NEW YORK, NY
BY RON SINGER**



**KEN SHAMROCK
VS.
ROCKY MAIVIA**



Rocky can't catch a break anywhere. Not only did the fans start derisive chants as soon as his name was mentioned, but Shamrock went on to destroy him in the ring. Shamrock attacked right at the bell with a series of punches and a clothesline. Rocky then briefly fled the ring. Later, he nailed a DDT, and with an assist from D-Lo Brown, he got a near fall. Shamrock retaliated with a huracanrana and locked on his ankle submission hold for the tapout win.

OTHER BOUTS: Billy Gunn & Jesse James beat The Headbangers ... Faarooq beat Ahmed Johnson ... Crush & Chainz beat D-Lo Brown & Kama Mustafa ... WWF World champ Shawn Michaels pinned Steve Lombardi ... WWF World tag team champs The Road Warriors beat Los Boricuas ... Kane beat Vader ... Max Mini, Nova, & Mosaic beat Torito, Piratita Morgan, & Tarantula ... Dude Love pinned Jim Neidhart ... The Undertaker & Steve Austin beat Shawn Michaels & Hunter Hearst Helmsley.



Matt Brock's **Plain Speaking**

Harder than nails, veteran wrestling reporter Matt Brock has logged more miles covering wrestling than any other journalist. Every month Matt will travel to the sport's hotbeds, reporting everything he sees without fear or favor

There's a lot about George "The Animal" Steele that just isn't right, like the way he eats things nobody else in their right mind would eat. Take what happened here in a match between Dude Love and Savio Vega. Everyone came to see the match, of course, but what they didn't expect to see was

Steele, who stood in Dude's corner throughout, ripping off the turnbuckle padding and chewing on its insides. They also didn't expect to see Dude grab one of the turnbuckles and pound Vega with it. Don't know what's going on the mind of Steele and never did know, but this pairing with Dude Love—even if it only lasts for a few matches—is something for the WWF to be alarmed about. Two crazier men have never been on one side, which is the way it is right now. Wouldn't be surprised if Love and Steele went out afterward and dined on

some more turnbuckle padding. And a word about Love: He should go back to being Cactus Jack, because that's the name he had when he was most successful. Dude may be hearing a lot of cheers, but he's not tough enough to last over the long haul in today's WWF. Cactus Jack is. Mankind is, too, but the summer of Love is long over. As for Savio Vega, the man just doesn't seem to have it. He's been heading in the wrong direction ever since he formed Los Boricuas. By the way, I still haven't figured out what a Boricua is.

So much for Bam Bam Bigelow. The "Beast From The East" had beaten Shane Douglas for the ECW heavyweight title a while back, but he couldn't stand the pressure of having to defend the belt in front of a pay-per-view audience. Douglas beat Bigelow at ECW's November to Remember to regain the title, and that came as no surprise to anybody who has followed

PITTSBURGH, PA

MONACA, PA



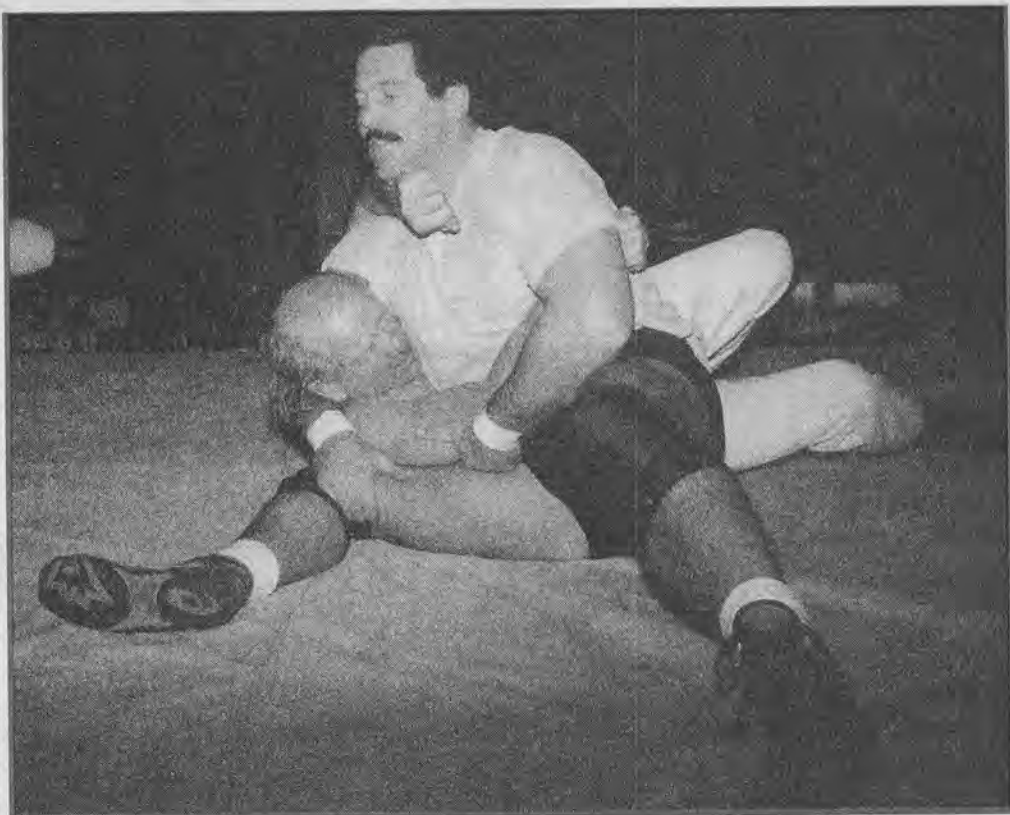
DUDE VS. SAVIO

Bigelow's career. Typical Bigelow match. He dominated from the start, even overcame the interference of Francine, Douglas's so-called cheerleader, but a mistake at the end cost him. Bigelow was ready to drop him onto a broken table set up in the ring, but Douglas stopped his momentum and hit him with a belly-to-belly suplex. The match ended right there. You know, I finally had some good things to say about Bigelow when he beat Douglas for the ECW belt, but now I have to think again about whether that was a fluke. I don't think it was. It took a

lot of guts for him to break away from Douglas and the rest of that little Triple Threat group, and if I were Douglas, I wouldn't be so cocky. Bigelow beat him for the title once, and I wouldn't bet against him doing it again.

Give a man some credit for guts when he messes with a Funk. That's what Dan Severn did after an NWA card, and it almost turned into a police situation. Dory Funk Jr. and Severn hadn't even wrestled each other on the card. Severn beat Typhoon, and Funk beat Steve Keirn for the Florida championship, but after the card, Severn was signing autographs for the fans when Marti Funk, Dory's wife, playfully splashed water on him. That quickly escalated into a full-scale battle between Dory Jr. and Severn during which they fought near the exit of the building. While somebody called the police, Funk challenged

GAINESVILLE, FL



SEVERN VS. FUNK

Severn to a match right then and there, even though the arena workers were already taking down the ring. Police finally broke up the brawl after threatening to arrest both men, but by no means is this feud over. "You mess with a Funk, you'd better be ready to finish the fight," Dory Jr. said. Severn must have known that because afterward he was still in a bad mood. I heard he still wanted another piece of Funk. Sounds like exactly what the NWA needs. Funk's getting up in years, but he can still wrestle, and Severn's one of the toughest in the business. Twenty years ago, a man like Severn could have battled men like Funk every night of the week in every arena in the United States and it would have been a brawl every time. Wrestling history was built on feuds like these.

Not that this reporter goes around identifying with female wrestlers, but Sherri Martel said something the other day that hit close to the heart.

Martel was talking about retiring a few months ago, but changed her mind after wrestling Debbie Combs in a Music City Wrestling card on Thanksgiving. "The bug is back," she said. "I thought I'd take a match or two and then retire for good, but I'm going to keep wrestling. I can't get it out of my system." Wrestling's one of those things that's hard to get out of your system. Wish I could count how many times over the past 15 years I've thought about putting away the notebook and typewriter and calling it a career, but staying away from the ring turned out to be impossible for me, too. Would try it for a week or two at a time, but the ring always came calling. Can't get it out of my system. Maybe one of these days, I'll move out of the hotel in New York City and move down south, but I don't see that day happening anytime soon. When ol' Matt Brock goes south, it'll be the six-foot-under kind. □

NEW YORK, NY

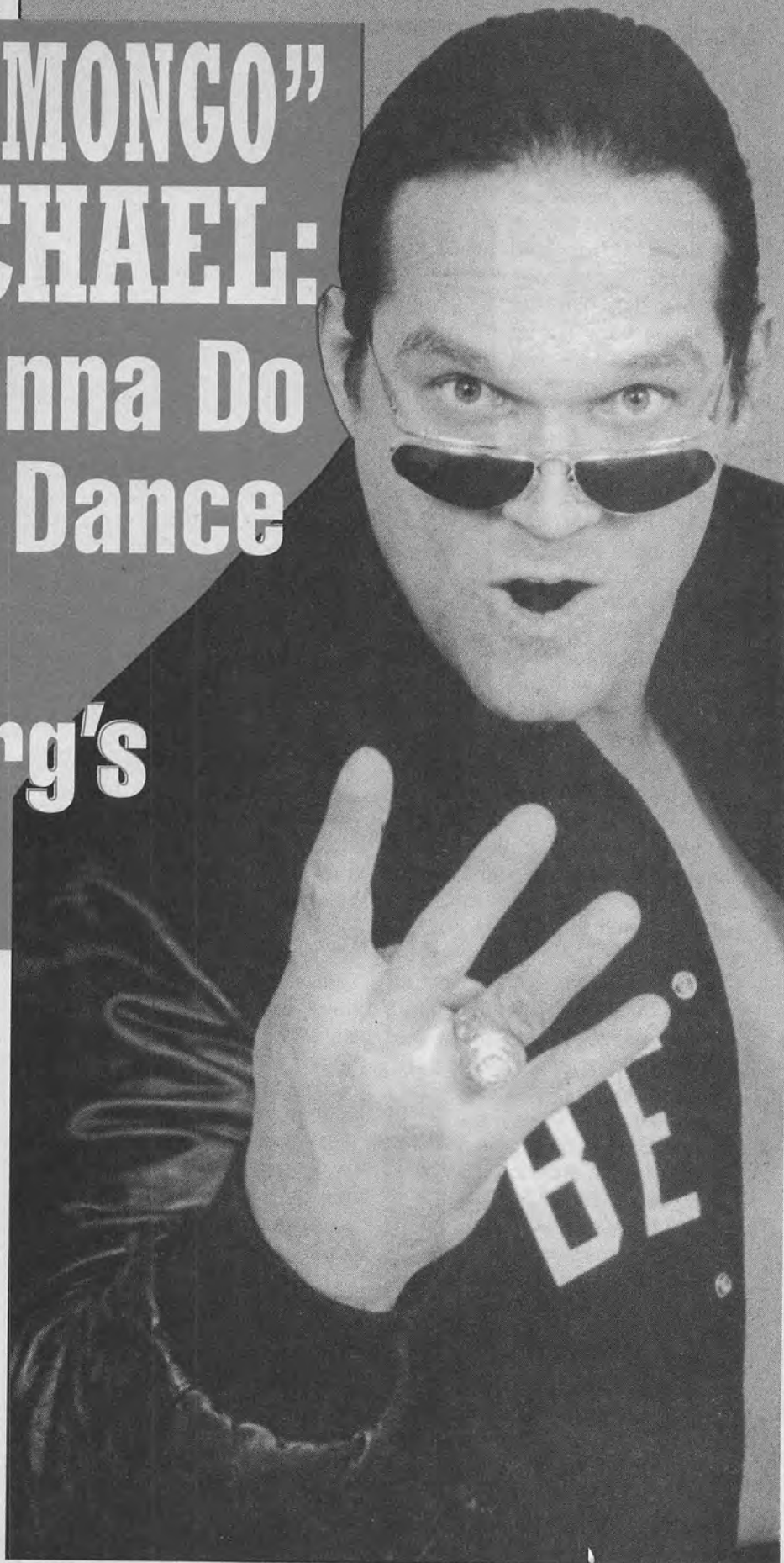
STEVE "MONGO" McMICHAEL: "I'm Gonna Do A Sack Dance On Bill Goldberg's Face!"

By Andy Rodriguez

WHEN STEVE McMICHAEL and his fellow Chicago Bears crushed the New England Patriots to win Super Bowl XX, Bill Goldberg was barely out of high school. To McMichael, that is proof Goldberg should show him some respect.

"That worthless punk!" McMichael sneered. "He was just a little boy when I was playing in a man's game! He thinks he can come into WCW and compete at my level? Let me tell you, he is making one big mistake!"

Yes, "Mongo" is angry, more angry than usual. That's because Goldberg is more than just another ex-pro football player eager to





Not long ago, Steve McMichael was clearly the most successful high-profile ex-professional football player in WCW. Then along came Bill Goldberg and suddenly McMichael had competition.

"Mongo" was not happy to see him

Steve McMichael (left) was understandably very angry when he saw Bill Goldberg posing with his Super Bowl ring (above). Their feud has intensified over the past few months.

try out the squared circle, and he certainly is no punk. He is a great athlete capable of putting together a great career in wrestling. He is a threat, and McMichael knows it.

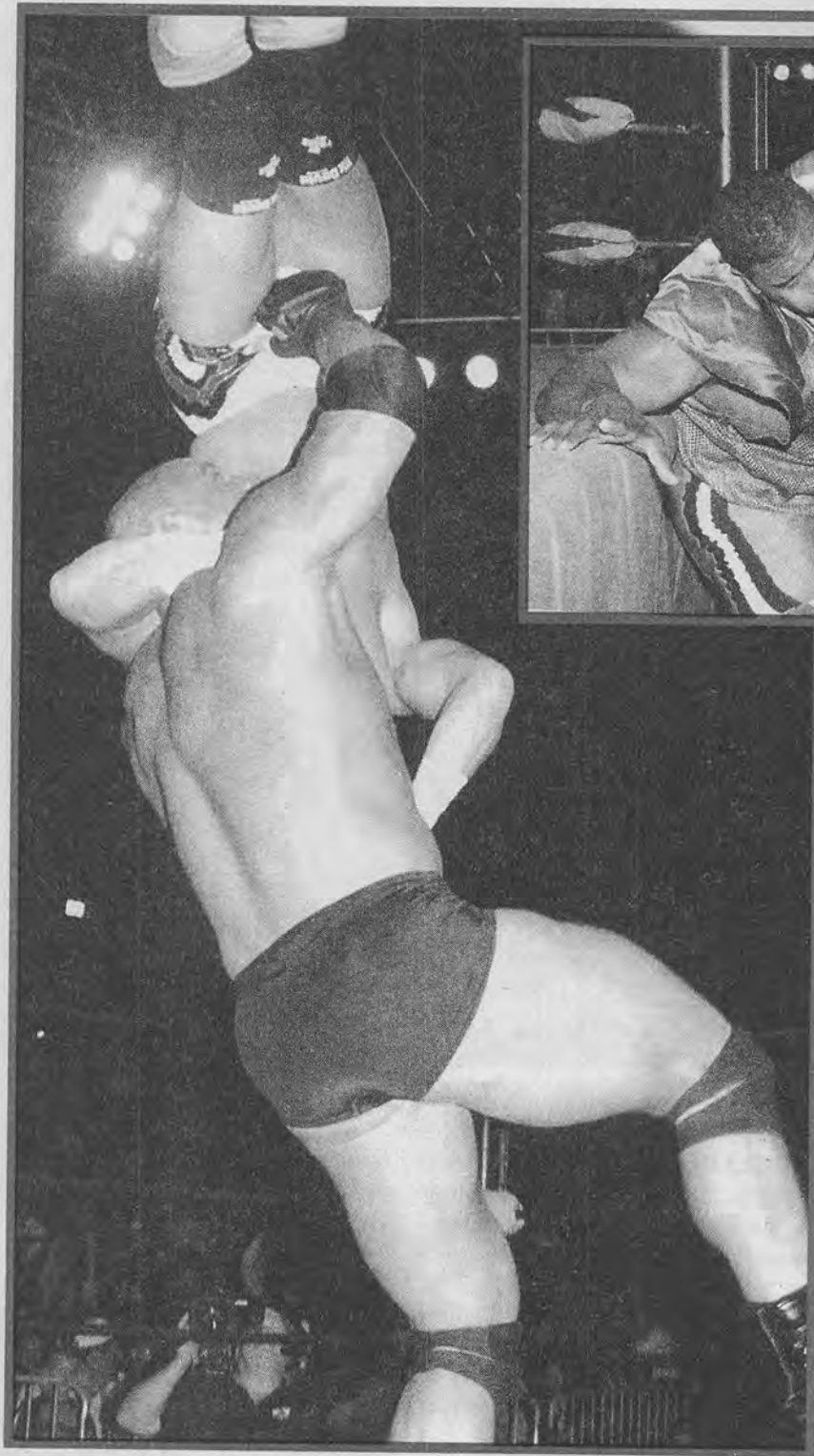
"Steve can rant and rave all he wants," said Dallas Page. "When he looks at Bill Goldberg, he's looking at a younger version of himself, and that has to scare him a little."

Though Goldberg never played on a Super Bowl champion team, his gridiron credentials are impressive. At the University of Georgia, he made the all-Southeastern Conference team from 1987-89. In 1989, he was drafted by the Los Angeles Rams, but a hamstring injury prevented him from making the team.

After the hamstring healed, he returned to the Rams, played for a year, then played a season in the World Football League. In 1991, he returned to the NFL as a member of the Atlanta Falcons. He played four seasons in Atlanta before retiring from the sport in 1994.

"No, I didn't play in a Super Bowl or make the Pro Bowl," said Goldberg, "but I went a lot further than most guys do. Now I'm making a commitment to WCW, and I intend to go even further—all the way to the top. If McMichael has a problem with that, tough!"

Of course McMichael has a problem with that, a problem that intensified at Halloween Havoc. On that card, "Mongo" was bat-



Goldberg hopes to use his vertical suplex on "Mongo" a lot in 1998 (left). At Slamboree last year, McMichael beat current NFL star Reggie White (above), but it was obvious he underestimated him. "Mongo" had better not do that with Goldberg.

"Aw, is Steven angry?" Debra countered. "Good, he should be. He should be angry that Bill Goldberg is more of a man than he'll ever be! But taking that little old ring of his is going to seem like nothing compared to what Bill is going to do to him next. He has my permission to beat Steven up all he wants."

Goldberg's challenge was enough to inspire McMichael, but Debra's taunts drove him even further. Before his scheduled match against Goldberg at World War III, Mongo attacked his foe with a lead pipe in the dressing room and took back that ring. The assault prevented Goldberg from competing, and McMichael went on to defeat Wright instead.

"I want every one of you to realize," McMichael said to a locker room full of reporters after the bout, "that Bill Goldberg brought this upon himself! He coulda had himself a nice career in WCW, but he had to take on the big dog! Now maybe he'll finally realize what an idiotic thing he's done!

ting Alex Wright when Goldberg, at the urging of Steve's estranged wife, Debra, hit the ring and attacked Steve, giving Wright a chance for an easy win.

The loss alone was enough to infuriate "Mongo," but what happened afterward really ticked him off: Debra rewarded Goldberg by

giving him McMichael's Super Bowl ring.

"She wants to hang out with that piece of trash, that's fine," said Mongo, "but that ring belongs to me! He didn't earn it. I did! He wasn't good enough. I was! Man, that burns me up more than even losing a title!"



McMichael had obvious advantages in size and strength in all his matches with Jeff Jarrett last year. He won't have them against Goldberg.

Maybe now he'll just get his sorry butt out of WCW!"

Naturally, Goldberg has no intention of going anywhere. On the contrary, he views it as a compliment that Mongo is coming after him so furiously.

"I guess that means I'm on the right track," Goldberg said. "I haven't been in WCW very long, but Steve already considers me a huge threat. That's because I am a huge threat! Hell, he can have his ring. What's important to me is getting him in the ring and showing the world I am a superior athlete. It's time he stops living off past glories and deals with the here and now."

Goldberg's confidence is justified, but before he gets too cocky, he should realize that McMichael has demonstrated his worth as a wrestler. When he left the broadcast table to compete, most serious observers laughed, but he quickly became a valuable member of The Four Horsemen.

McMichael silenced any remaining doubters when he captured the U.S. title. Although he no longer possesses that prized



The ferocity Goldberg wrestles with in all his matches is really something to see. He looks mad even against opponents with whom he has no personal issues. McMichael doesn't fit into that category.

championship, he remains one dangerous grappler.

"Goldberg will get his turn with me," McMichael claimed, "but it'll be on my terms! When we do meet, he'll be wishing he was back in the NFL! At least there he had a helmet and pads to protect him! I make you this promise: I'm gonna do a sack dance on Bill Goldberg's face! And it'll make

that lead pipe I smacked him with feel like a fluffy pillow."

Goldberg's response was equally challenging.

"Before McMichael can do a sack dance on my face," he said, "he has to get me flat on my back, and I don't like his chances there! Fact is, I do respect his talents as a wrestler. I think what he's done has been impressive. But he needs to respect me, too. I belong in this organization as much as he does. He may have won the U.S. title, but I intend to beat him to the World title. He might be happy with a sack dance, but I'll only be happy with a touchdown."

McMichael's progress in WCW was one of the surprises of 1997.

Goldberg's accomplishments may very well offer a surprise in 1998. What won't be a surprise, though, is if McMichael vs. Goldberg ends up being one of the biggest feuds of the year.

"If you gave me a choice of a shot at the World belt or a shot at Goldberg," said McMichael, "hell, I think I just might take Goldberg!"

No helmets allowed. □

BAM BAM BIGELOW'S MESSAGE "I WON'T SELL"

Chants of "You sold out!" are becoming louder in arenas nationwide. ECW fans are the loudest of the bunch. Bam Bam Bigelow doesn't plan on ever hearing such taunts. ECW, he says, is his home for good

By Harry Burkett

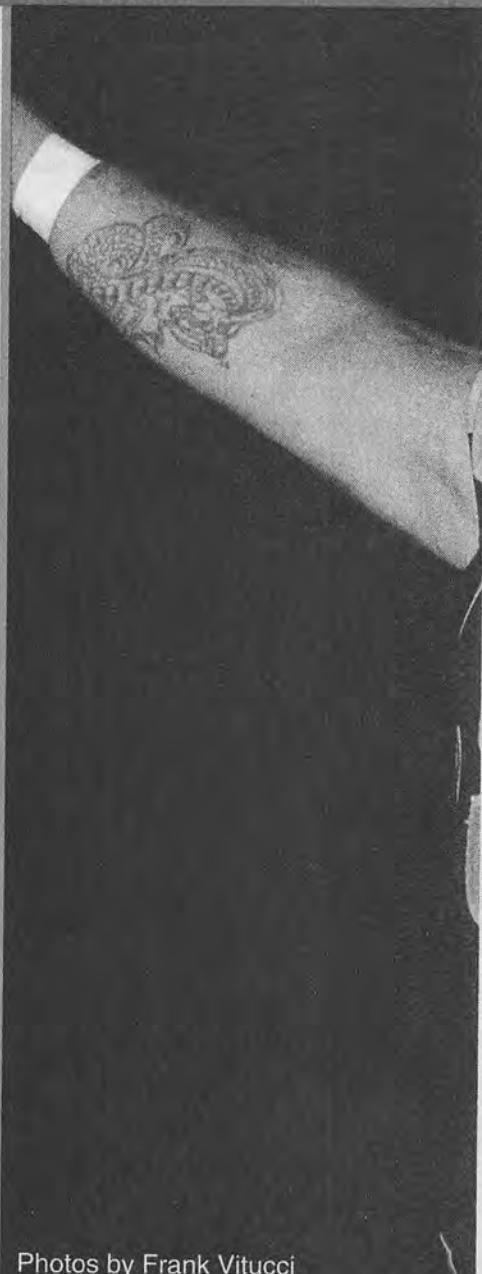
IT WAS PAST midnight. There's always plenty of activity in Philadelphia during that late hour, but, unfortunately for Bam Bam Bigelow, it wasn't a good time to find a decent pizzeria. Bigelow, certainly not a native son, had no clue where to look. Every place he looked was either closed or seemed too filthy to eat in. Philly, like ECW, isn't always accommodating to newcomers.

It's no secret that most of ECW's wrestlers prefer cold beers after a night of head-smashing and bone-breaking. Bigelow is different. He still considers himself an outsider when it comes to his

fellow competitors. He's always been a loner, but it bothers him this time—and he isn't sure why.

"I'm not somebody who likes spittin' beer all over myself and yuckin' it up with the guys, anyway," Bigelow confided as he sauntered down South Street and finally spotted a well-lit pizzeria. "I don't need to act tough in a bar to prove I'm a man. But people treat me like I don't belong. And I'm not just talking about wrestlers. I mean the fans, too. I don't know what they want out of me. I wrestle in ECW. Hell, I won their title. But I don't think anybody sees me as a full-fledged ECW guy."

Although Bigelow seemed to have a bit of a hard time putting



Photos by Frank Vitucci

TO ECW FANS: OUT!"



his feelings into words, it isn't difficult to figure out what he means. ECW is more than a federation full of competitors battling for a common goal. ECW is an attitude—a way of life. Take a look at any ECW crowd. Fans don't chant "Big-e-low!" or "Doug-las!" too often. Their chant of choice is "E-C-W! E-C-W!"

These fans don't always cheer for one wrestler over another. That's because most of ECW's stars have earned their respect by putting their bodies through the wringer every time they enter the ring. There's only one way to pass the initiation into this fraternity—by being at your hardcore best on a nightly basis.

Whether Bigelow realizes it or not, he's well on his way to earning this respect. At first, the conventional wisdom was that he'd dump ECW in a heartbeat if he could return to a prime spot in either the WWF or WCW. Now fans aren't so sure. Bigelow certainly went to great lengths to win the ECW title, even when it meant turning against Shane Douglas.

In other modes of life, Bigelow would have been condemned for betraying a friend. Not in ECW. When Bigelow shocked Douglas by emerging as his mystery opponent and pinning him for the ECW belt on that fateful October night in Elmhurst, New York, he proved that being recognized as the federation's best was more than a career goal. It was a fire burning deep in his gut.

Bigelow suddenly stopped walking. The neon sign in the window was shut off, so it was nearly impossible to see the name of the restaurant. But there were plenty of people inside. It seemed like a good place to grab a bite before heading home.

"I didn't come to ECW so I could hear the fans cheer," he scoffed as he waited for his large anchovy-smothered pizza. "But I also knew these fans were the most demanding in the world. In some federations, depending on who you are, you get a big ovation every night



When Bam Bam Bigelow first chose to make ECW a full-time home, he decided he wanted to have Shane Douglas as an ally (above). Now he's feuding with "The Franchise" (right). He says ECW fans can count on watching him for a long time.

just by showing up. Not here. If you make an ECW crowd stand on its feet, that really means something."

The cashier signaled to Bigelow that his order was ready. Wearing a bandanna to cover his tattooed head, Bigelow got more than a few stares as he strolled to the counter. It wasn't certain whether they were wrestling fans or if they were just struck with the awesome sight of the 368-pounder. It didn't really matter, because Bigelow was more concerned with eating the pizza while it was hot—and getting his point across.

"Sometimes I feel like fans don't

trust me," Bigelow said while chewing a cheesy slice. "Sure, they yell and scream whenever I beat the hell out of Douglas or take [Chris] Candido down a notch or two. But they probably think I'm gonna use ECW as a steppingstone like a bunch of other guys have. Well, ECW isn't a steppingstone for Bam Bam Bigelow. This is the place where I have arrived! Other promoters wanted me to fit in a nice little marketable package. Hey, I've got news for 'em: I'm more than an image or a persona. I'm a man! That's why ECW fans shouldn't worry. I won't sell out!"

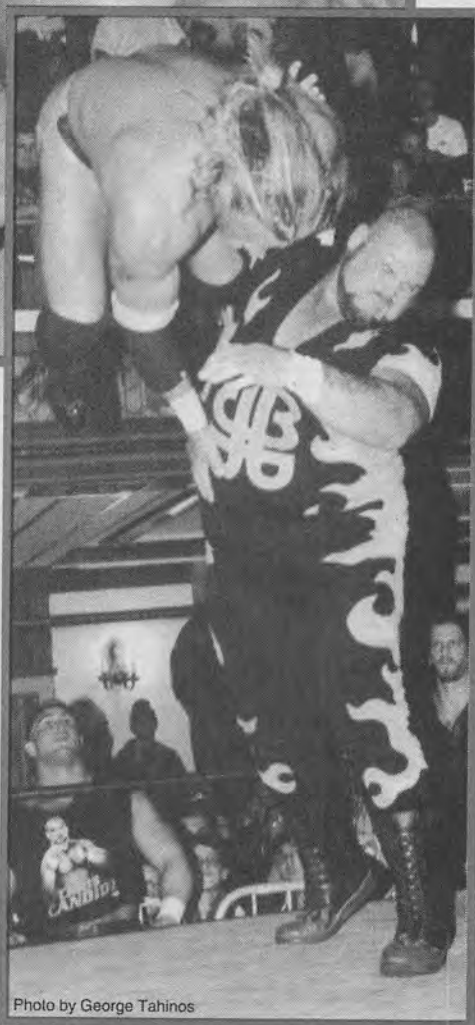
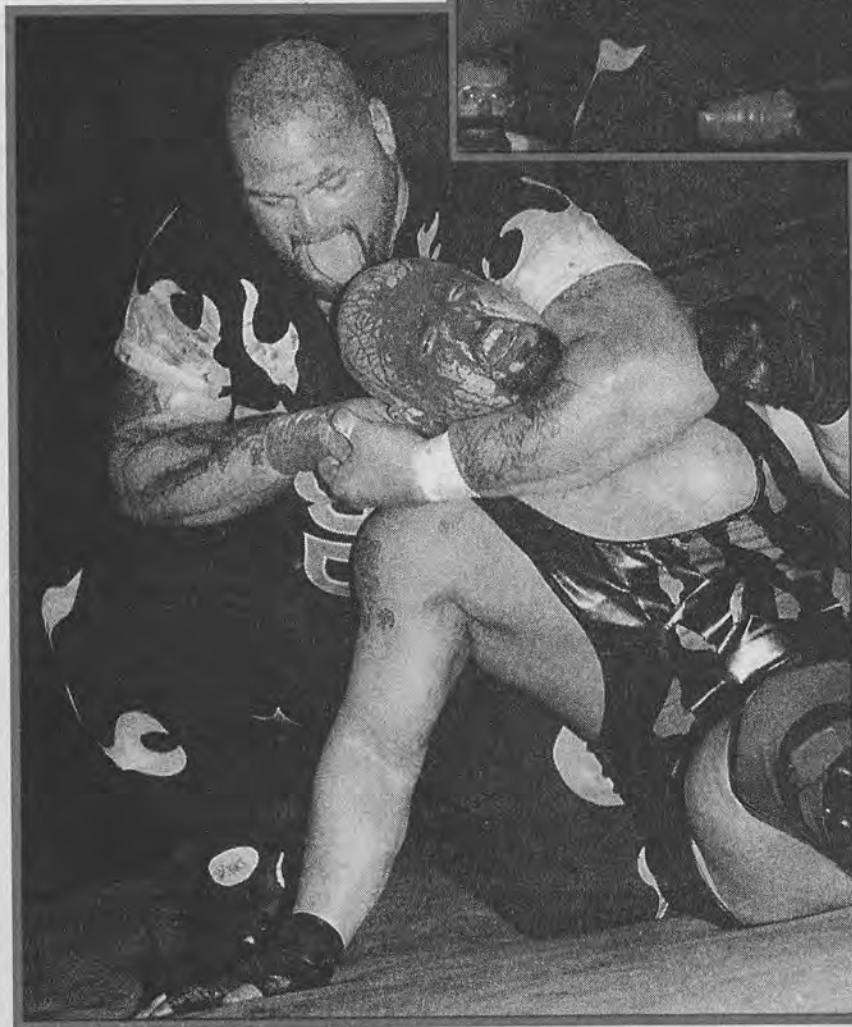
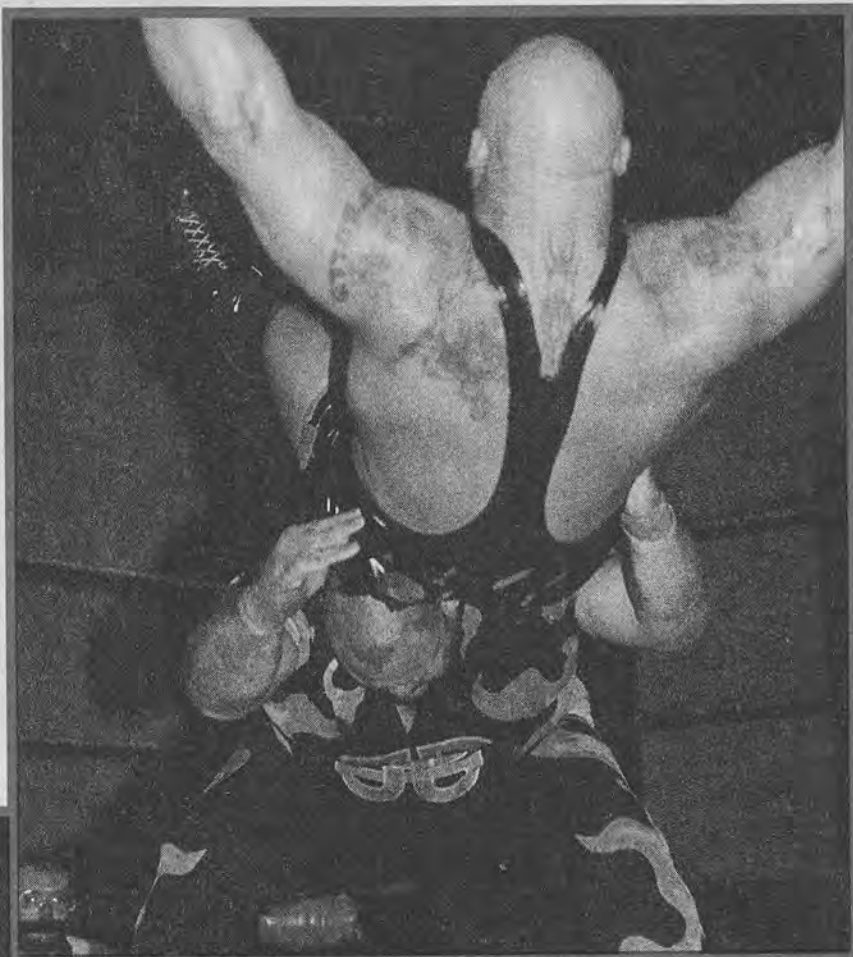


Photo by George Tahinos

As Bigelow turned up the volume, several of the restaurant's patrons eyed the big man. He sucked a giant slurp of grape soda from his straw, then looked at his watch and muttered, "I'd better hurry up and eat this because I want to get back to Jersey by 3 a.m."

It is true that former main-event stars from either WCW or the WWF get a bad rap. But fans have plenty of reasons to be suspicious of headliners who pitch their tents in ECW. Some wrestlers consider it a layover after receiving their pink slips from one of the Big Two. Others consider the "third federation" as a springboard back to prominence. Men such as Cactus Jack, Steve Austin, Brian Pillman, and Rick Rude spent time in ECW before securing contracts with either WCW or the WWF.



The sadistic side of Bigelow emerged during a match he had with Pit Bull II. The fans of ECW like seeing that and have let Bam Bam know it. He still feels like somewhat of an outsider there, though.

Bigelow, however, wants to be part of ECW's national expansion. That may not be good news for Douglas or Candido, but it's great news for ECW fans.

Bigelow had just finished his fourth slice when he leaned back and groaned, "I don't think I can eat any more. I guess nobody would believe it, but I usually go for a tossed salad."

He closed the lid on the box and went in search of his car. Bigelow had revealed his sentimental side that night—and he knew it. "I don't really give a damn about these ECW fans," he growled, "but I just want 'em to know I'm here to stay! All right?!"

That's better, Bam Bam. We don't want you to get too warm and fuzzy. □

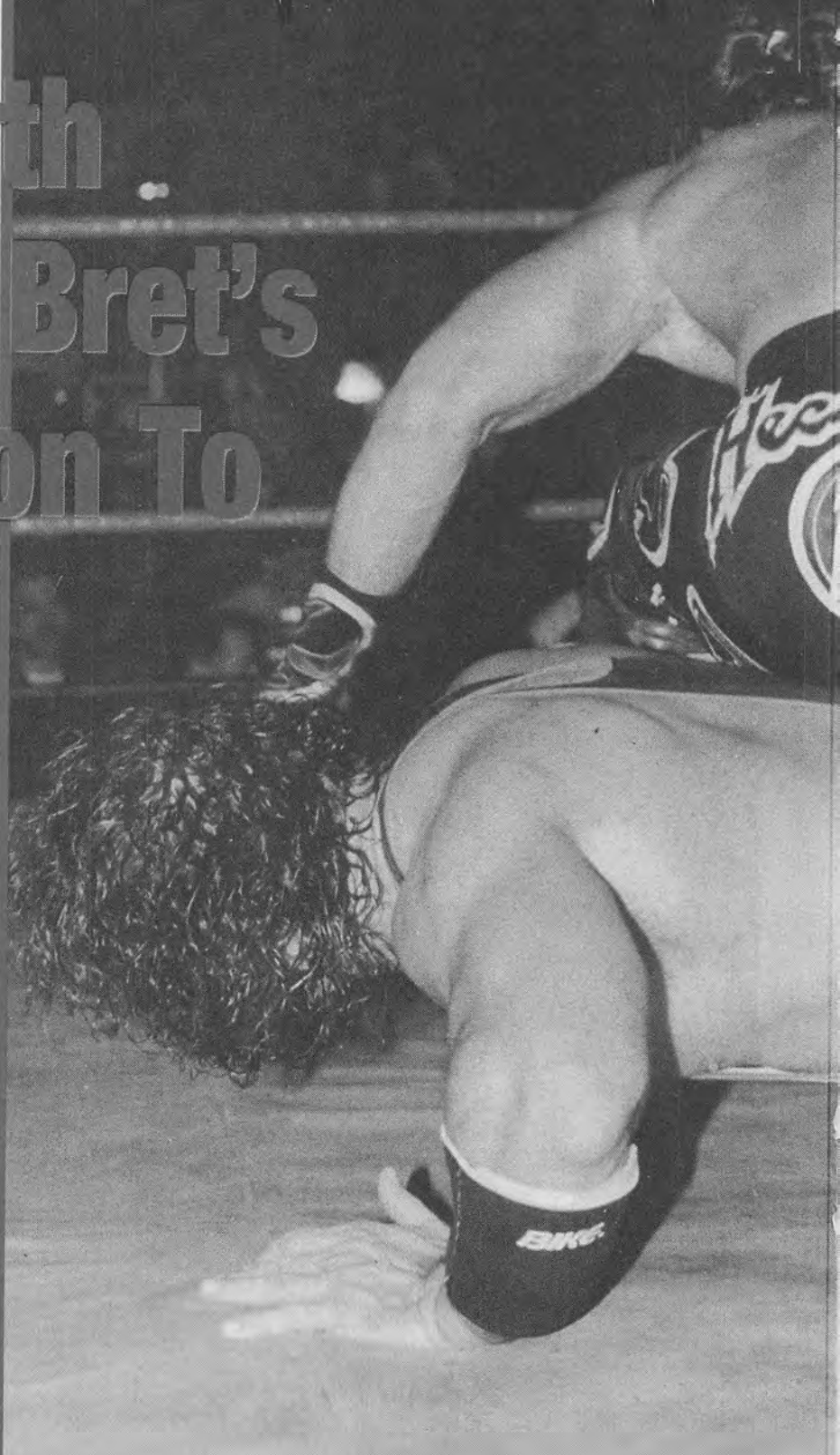
HART TRANSPLANT!


The Truth Behind Bret's Defection To WCW

By Harry Burkett

NOVEMBER 9, 1997 is a day that will live in wrestling infamy. Fans, wrestlers, and promoters watched in stunned disbelief as referee Earl Hebner called for the bell, signalling the end of the WWF World title match between Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels. Hart was livid; Michaels was shocked. Vince McMahon stood at ringside, shouting for Michaels to take the belt. Hart spat in McMahon's face.

These images now seem like something out of a bad dream. Bret Hart, once the quiet role



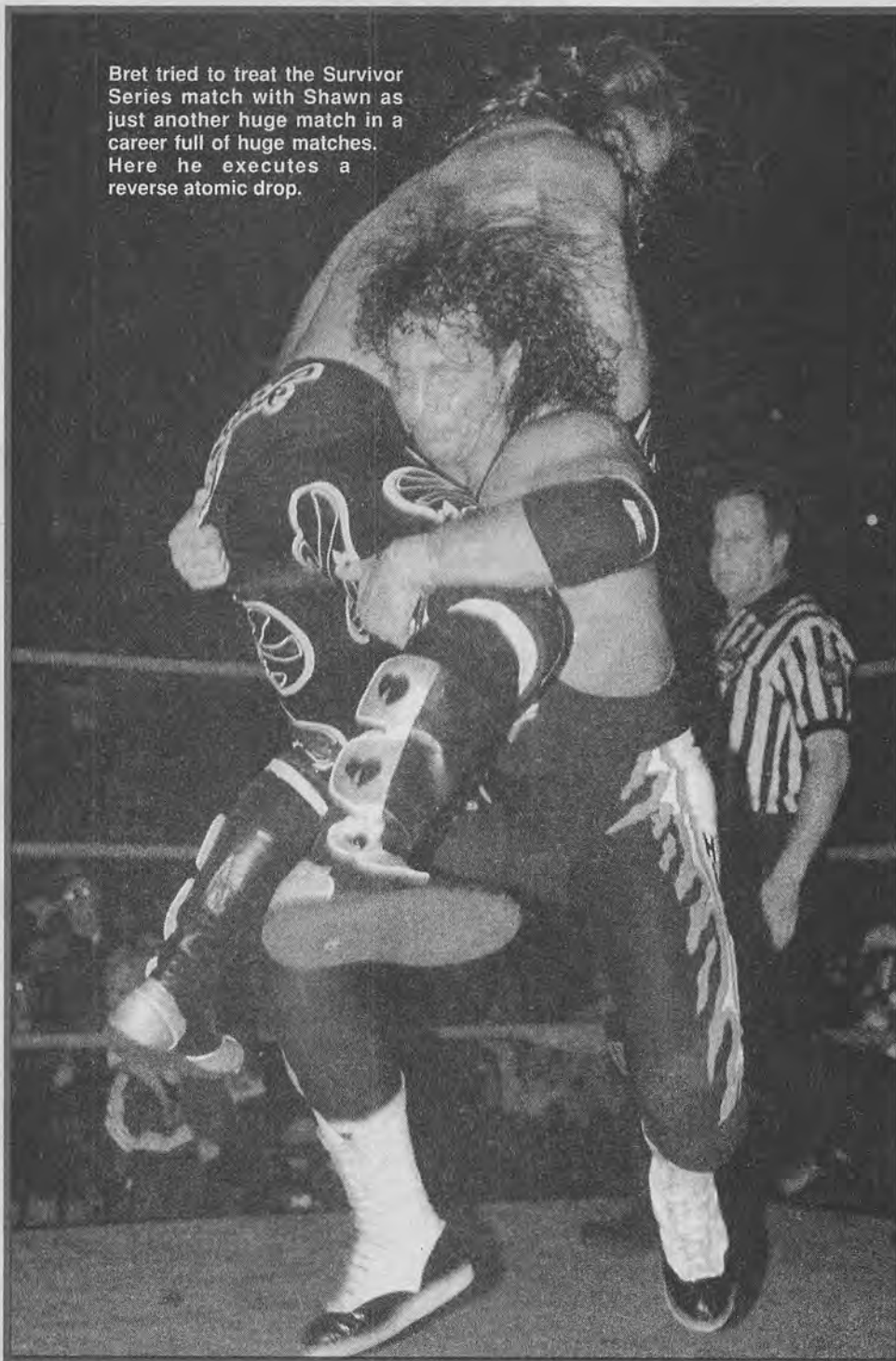


It's time to end the rumors, innuendoes, and falsehoods. This is the true story behind the Survivor Series fiasco, Bret Hart's departure, and Vince McMahon's role in

wrestling's most controversial chapter ever!

Bret Hart was so surprised to see his match with Shawn Michaels stopped so suddenly that he was still trying to maneuver his way out of the "sharpshooter" after the match was stopped (above). In the aftermath, both Vince McMahon (right) and Bret were feeling very angry.

Bret tried to treat the Survivor Series match with Shawn as just another huge match in a career full of huge matches. Here he executes a reverse atomic drop.



During the last year Hart competed in the WWF, he struggled with that very question. The lure of WCW began, in earnest, in the spring of 1996. Both Scott Hall and Kevin Nash—superstars on par with Hart in almost every respect—had decided that more money, easier road schedules, and the prospect of forming the New World Order were enough to seek employment in Ted Turner's multimedia empire. Hart, considering himself a loyalist and traditionalist, decided to stay with the promotion that made him a star.

There was no doubt the WWF had been very good to him. He had doggedly climbed the ladder of success, rising from mid-card competitor to Hulk Hogan's successor as federation flagbearer. From 1987 to 1990, he and Jim Neidhart held the tag team title twice. He was Intercontinental champion on two occasions and World champ five times between 1992 and 1997.

Hart's enthusiasm for the WWF began to ebb, however, when Shawn Michaels rose to prominence. Little by little, Michaels was getting

model for a generation of wrestling fans, was the epitome of the tragic hero. Vince McMahon, the man who helped make Hart a superstar, stood accused of betraying a friend's trust and throwing the integrity of the entire WWF into question. The moments after Michaels' title victory will be forever etched in the sport's annals. But that bizarre climax is

only a small part of a complicated, and sometimes murky, chain of events that reveals the political intrigue that is very much a part of wrestling.

WHY DID BRET WANT TO LEAVE THE WWF?

Bret Hart's decision to leave the WWF was not made overnight.

more air time, was hyped as "the most resilient competitor in the WWF," and became a threat to Hart's main event status. The competition finally got physical on March 31, 1996, when then-WWF World champion Bret Hart faced Shawn Michaels in an "iron man" match, with the victory awarded to the man who scored the most pin-falls in one hour. Ninety-one sec-

onds into sudden-death overtime, Michaels pinned Hart. The "Hitman" cried foul as "The Heartbreak Kid" danced and pranced his way to a successful title reign. Hart spent most of the summer making television appearances and contemplating his next career move.

Meanwhile, WCW was gaining momentum against the WWF, and was finally winning the Monday night ratings war. WCW Senior Vice President Eric Bischoff saw the acquisition of Hart as a sure way to put the squeeze on the WWF. Hart had amicable meetings with WCW representatives and was offered a lucrative contract.

On October 26, after months of weighing the pros and cons, Hart opted for a 20-year contract proposed by McMahon. Reportedly, Hart would earn \$1.5-million during each of his next three years as an active competitor, then receive a lesser—yet very respectable sum—during the remaining 17 years. According to Hart, the money was not the only factor that helped him make that decision. He felt a personal loyalty to McMahon and had a profound respect for the WWF as an organization. Had money been the only factor, he would have left for WCW then.

In 1997, Hart's loyalty was tested like never before. He denounced American fans for their relentless thirst for violence. He also accused the WWF hierarchy of showing favoritism toward Michaels. Despite his drop in popularity, he remained committed to the WWF ... until Sep-

tember 22. That's when McMahon reportedly approached Hart with a deal of a different kind. Sources say that, as a cost-cutting measure, he presented Hart with the option to either re-work his 20-year contract or seek the best possible deal with WCW.

In the months leading up to all this, Bret mentioned that he didn't like the direction in which the WWF was moving. He didn't care for all the lewd behavior. But the mere fact that, way back in March,

Hart wrote on a questionnaire given to him by this very magazine, that the one thing he wanted to tell Bischoff was, "What could have been, maybe should have been," said a lot. It said that nearly eight months before the Survivor Series fiasco, Bret was not happy where he was. Sure, when he found out there was a chance he'd end up making less money than he had been promised when he returned to the WWF late in 1996, his decision to pursue other



As he had always done during his long WWF career, Bret put everything he had into this match. It's such a shame that he had to leave on such bad terms.

The "Hitman" was not quite prepared for this aerial assault by Michaels. And he really wasn't ready for what happened at the end of the match. McMahon wasn't sorry for doing any of the things he did, though.



opportunities became easier to make, but his defection was not all about money.

In any case, just days before Survivor Series '97, Hart's struggle was over. He signed with WCW on November 1, although he remained WWF World champion. This set the stage for the next dilemma. What would Bret do with the title? And, more importantly, what would McMahon do with it?

WAS HART JUSTIFIED IN PUNCHING McMAHON?

At the forefront, it must be said that Hart was not justified in punching McMahon. For a wrestler in his prime (any wrestler, for that matter) to strike a 52-year-old promoter is unforgivable, no matter what the motivation is. But was Bret justified in his anger? That point is up for debate. The November 9 title match unofficially began when Michaels incited the fans in Montreal by defaming the Canadian flag. Hart and Michaels brawled wildly throughout the arena, knocking down several officials. The bout, once it found its way between the ring ropes, was just as intense.

The controversy didn't start until a few seconds before the ending.

Hart jumped off the top rope to smash Michaels with a double-axhandle. Michaels pulled referee Earl Hebner directly into Hart's path. With Hebner down, Michaels trapped Hart in a "sharpshooter." Hebner rose from the canvas, and a mere three seconds later, he asked Bret if he wanted to submit. Without waiting for an answer, he called for the bell.

If Hart submitted, it was not audible. If Hart had tapped out, the fans at ringside—and the pay-per-view audience—would have seen it. Michaels, with a

look of amazement on his face, was declared the new WWF World champion. By this time, McMahon was standing next to the ring, shouting for Michaels to take the belt. Hart began cursing McMahon from the ring, then spat in his face.

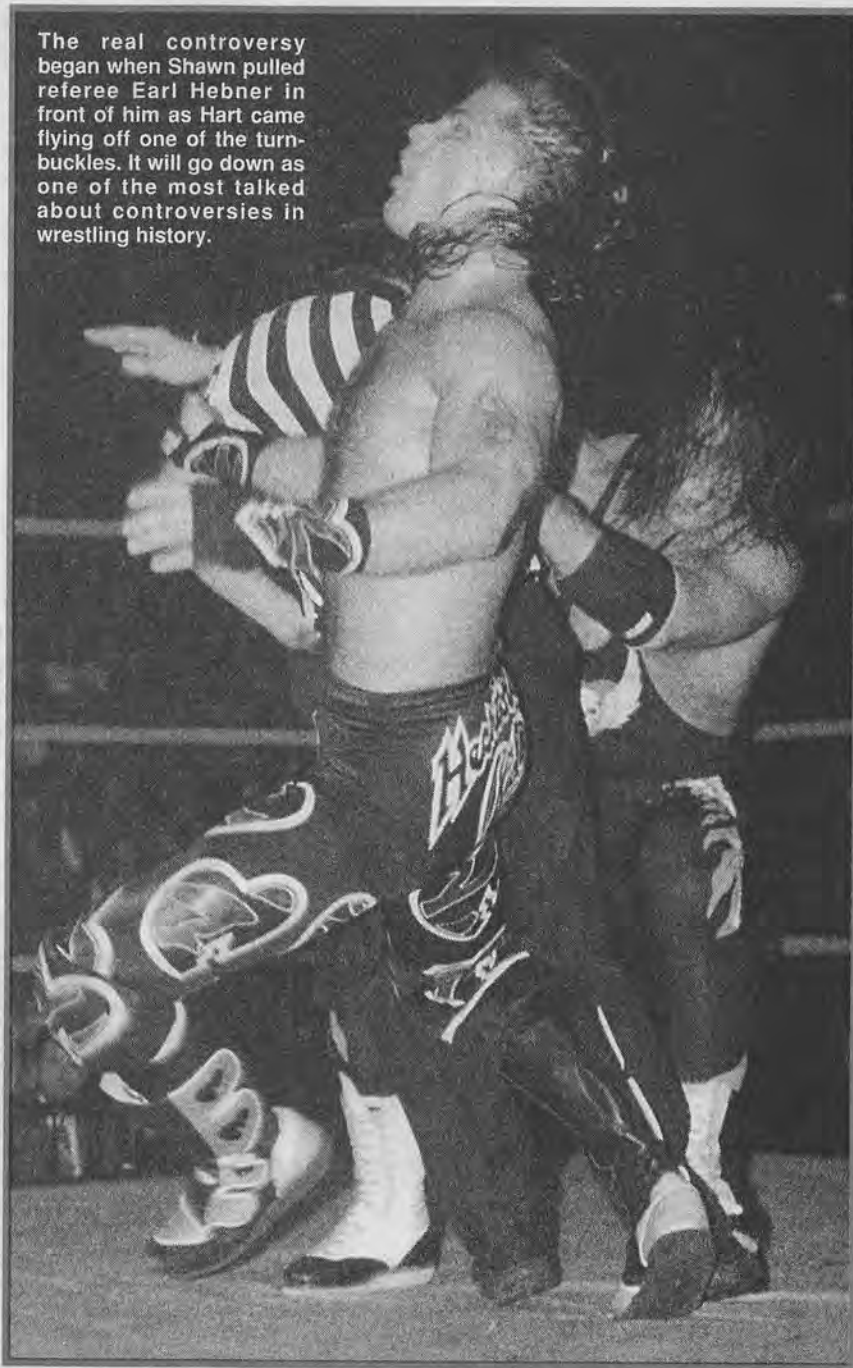
Hebner, McMahon, and other WWF officials immediately left the ringside area. Hart raged like a madman, smashing television monitors and other equipment. Many fans roared their approval. Owen Hart, Davey Boy Smith, and Jim Neidhart rushed to the ring and calmed Bret down. Then Hart thanked those in attendance, gave the "I love you" sign, and finger-painted "WCW" to fans on each corner of the ring.

Later, sources say, McMahon went to meet Hart in his dressing room. Hart, who was in the shower, was told McMahon was there. An angry Bret yelled for someone to get him out of the room. McMahon insisted on clearing the air. Hart, while putting his clothes on, warned McMahon to leave once again. During the verbal exchange that ensued, Bret accused McMahon of a setup. The two had begun arguing again when Bret punched McMahon several times.

"I did not quit," Hart said later. "They wanted to humiliate me in Canada and make sure I didn't take the [WWF World title] belt to WCW. I was fearful there might be some trickery, but I had assurances from WWF officials that there would be none in this match." McMahon all but admitted later that he had felt it necessary for him to take the belt from Bret for fear that Bret would not give it up, so if that's what really happened, yes, Bret Hart was justified in being very angry.

But whether or not Bret felt justified in striking McMahon is beside the point. This had been the most despicable act of his career.

The real controversy began when Shawn pulled referee Earl Hebner in front of him as Hart came flying off one of the turnbuckles. It will go down as one of the most talked about controversies in wrestling history.



WAS VINCE McMAHON TELLING THE TRUTH ON RAW?

Eight days after Survivor Series, McMahon appeared before the cameras to tell his side of the story. The suave, good-natured play-by-play man was gone. Vince McMahon, the head of the WWF, would be the person speaking this night. He still sported a black eye. Jim Ross, who was sitting at a table with

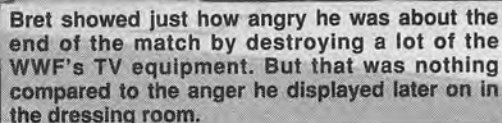
McMahon, was asking the questions. Ross immediately popped the question that the entire wrestling world wanted to hear: "Did Vince McMahon 'screw' Bret Hart?"

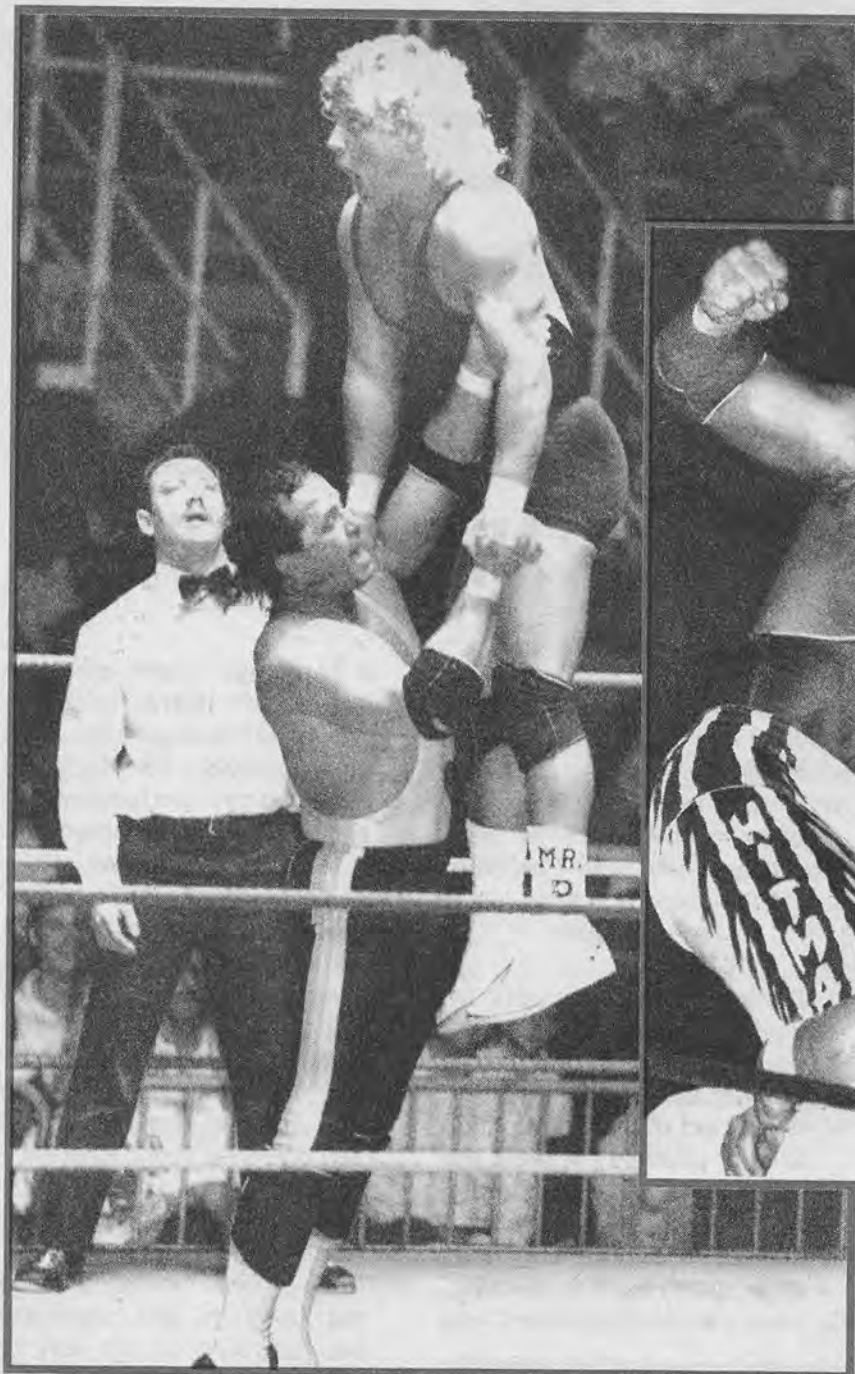
McMahon, as confident as ever, stated, "Bret Hart screwed Bret Hart." He expressed regret for the way in which Bret departed the WWF. After 14 honorable years as one of the federation's top stars, it was almost tragic that his tenure might be judged by his

McMahon never addressed the accusation of whether he had ordered officials to make sure Bret came out on the losing end, but almost everyone believes that is what happened. Instead, McMahon

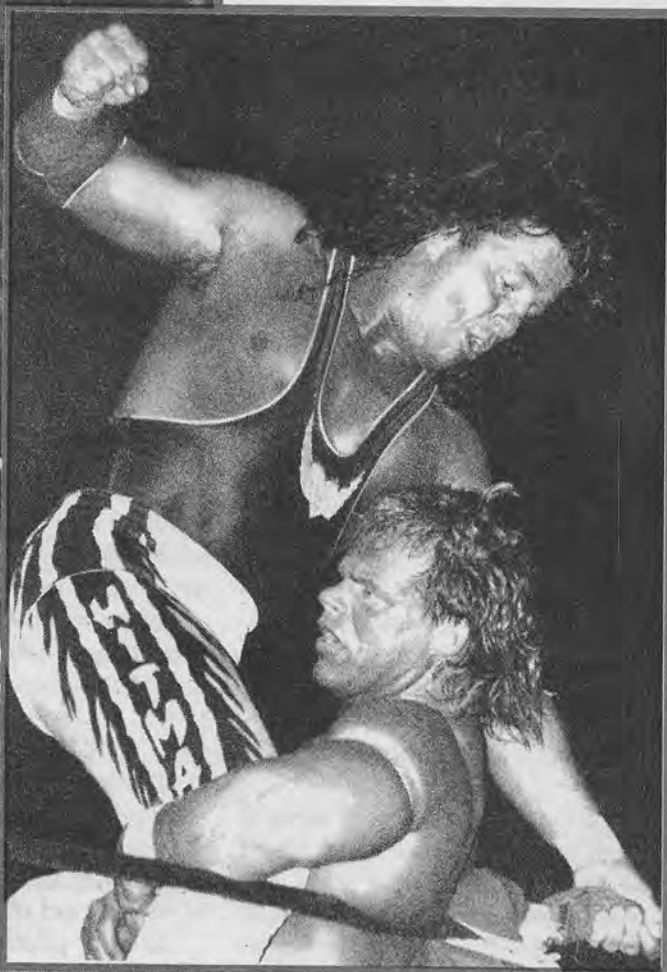
As for McMahon saying that he encouraged Bret to pursue a deal with WCW, that has been confirmed, and it really shouldn't come as a surprise. McMahon

While one bottom line is ratings, the other is money. Is Hart worth a reported annual income of \$3-million for the next three years? Sources say Hart will only be required to lace his boots, on average, one day out of every three. This will certainly not sit well with other stars who wrestle many more matches for much less pay. Will this inspire them to renegotiate their contracts? How many disgruntled competitors will simply pack their bags and head to the WWF?





Now that he has signed with WCW, Bret will get to take on some new opponents ... and old rivals such as Curt Hennig (left) and Lex Luger (below) if he so chooses. Signing Bret could hurt WCW in some ways, but overall it looks like a good move.



Jerry Lawler, during a recent *Raw*, jokingly remarked that many "guys down in Atlanta will be checking out their contracts." That is very likely. Will the potential unrest by WCW's established talent be worth it? After all, Bret is 40 years old and admits his "knees are turning into powder." The outcome of this depends largely on Hart. His first months in WCW will be crucial, as he chooses his allies and targets his enemies. It

will also depend on whether Bret can still appeal to American fans. His presence will definitely help WCW establish a presence in Canada, where Hart is now a bigger hero than ever.

The overall success of WCW's acquisition will also depend on how Hart's exodus affects the WWF. Can the federation rebound from losing him? The WWF recovered, to a certain extent, from the departures of megastars such as

Hulk Hogan, Scott Hall, Kevin Nash, and Roddy Piper. Shawn Michaels seemed capable of filling Bret's shoes back in 1996—and is even more eager to do so now. Likewise, Owen Hart might finally come into his own. From a promotional standpoint, Vince McMahon has saved a lot of money by waving Bret goodbye. He will now have more resources to at least try to develop new talent.

Critics have always been eager to administer last rites to the WWF. But McMahon has been able to survive every time. Can he do it again? The Bret Hart controversy might have come to an end, but the fight may have only just begun. □

HOTSEAT

STEVE AUSTIN

"I'M WORRIED, BUT I AIN'T SCARED!"

STEVE AUSTIN HAS made a stunning comeback. Only a month after orthopedic surgeon Dr. Joseph Torg declared he was still "reserving judgment on whether it's wise for Steve to continue wrestling," Austin walked into the Survivor Series, stunned Owen Hart, and regained the WWF Intercontinental title in about four minutes.

During October, Austin went to great lengths to ensure Hart would be wearing the I-C gold when they finally squared off on November 9. In fact, Austin helped Hart beat Faarooq in the finals of the I-C title tournament during the Cold Day in Hell pay-per-view. Several weeks later, Ahmed Johnson was on the verge of defeating Hart before Austin interfered on Owen's behalf. Johnson, The Nation of Domination, and The Hart Foundation are all gunning for Austin now.

All these professional challenges, however, pale in comparison to Austin's precarious physical condition. Another blow to the top of the head or the spinal column could cause Austin to be paralyzed yet again. Owen Hart would like nothing better than to put Austin back on the injured list.

Austin has made too many enemies. He even angered federation head Vince McMahon, who encour-

aged him to sign a waiver that absolves the WWF of any responsibility if he is injured during a match. That encourages Austin's rivals to be even more vicious when trying to force him out of the sport. Senior Writer Harry Burkett spoke with "Stone-Cold" when he recently paid a visit to INSIDE WRESTLING's editorial offices.

Q: Congratulations on your triumphant return, Steve. How does it feel to be back in the ring on a regular basis?

A: What kind of stupid question is that, jackass? It feels the same way it always has. I'm alive, I'm breathin', there's ring ropes, and there's a mat. What else is there to know?

Q: I was just curious to know if your

"Yeah, I got back at Owen Hart, I made his life a livin' hell, but I ain't through with him. Not by a longshot. He's still got a lot more dues to pay."

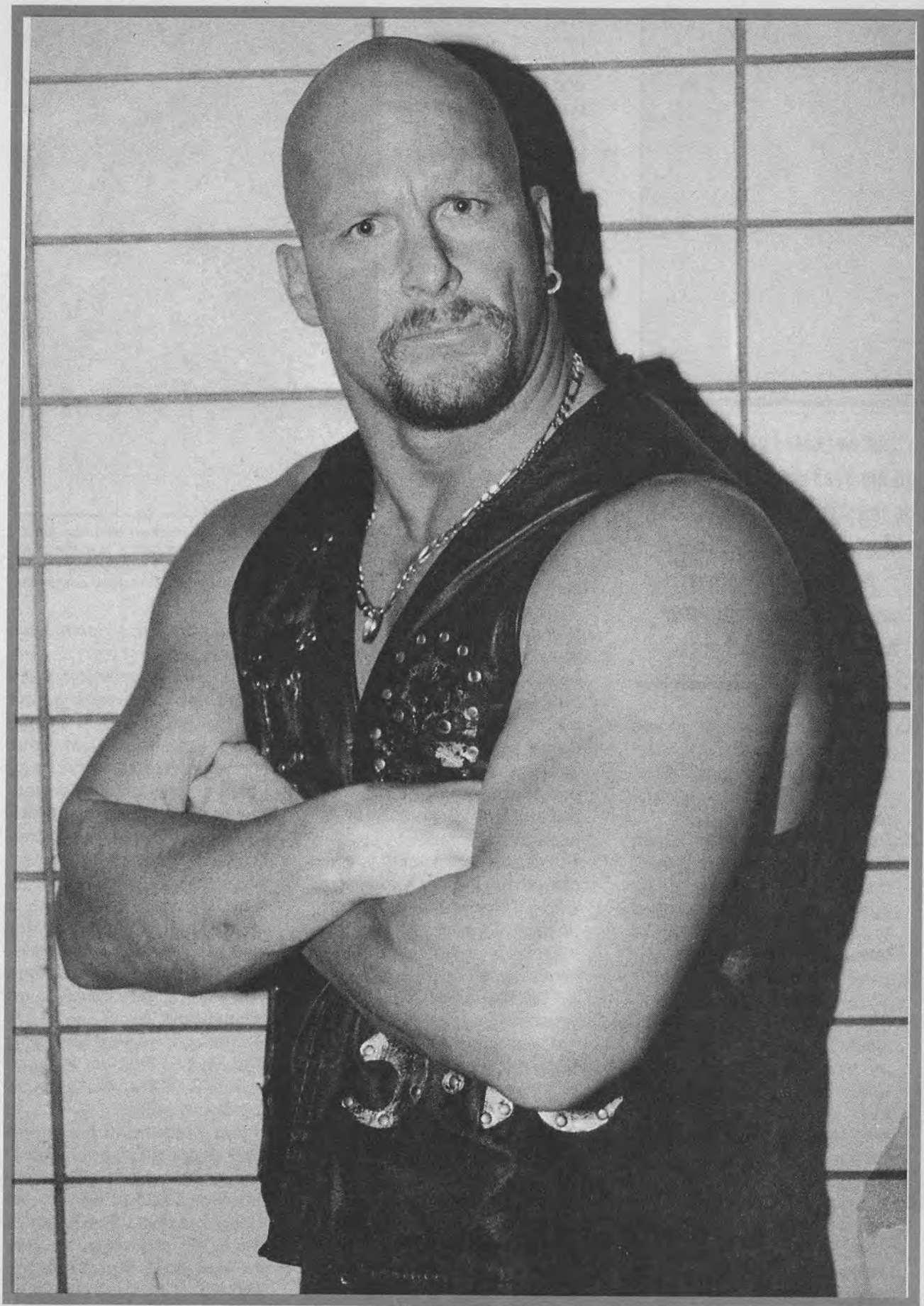
spinal injury has affected your in-ring performance or the way you approach matches.

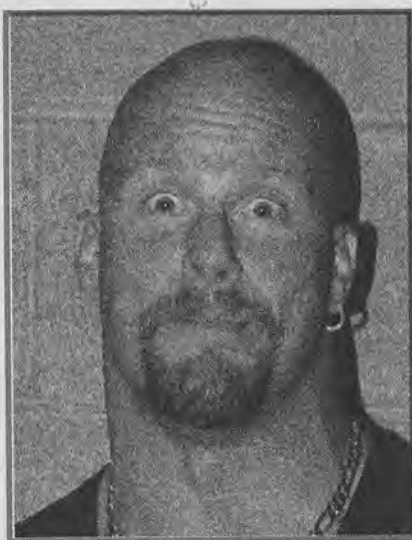
A: Here I am, knockin' out everybody I get my hands on, givin'

a "stunner" here, givin' a "stunner" there, givin' a "stunner" everywhere, and you're asking if my injury has affected my performance? Maybe I ought to drop you on that stack of dimes you call a neck, then ask you if it's affected my in-ring performance. The only thing that's changed is I'm tryin' real hard not to get dropped on my damn head again.

Q: Fair enough. But you stayed very active during your layoff. You delivered "Stone-Cold stunners" to Ahmed Johnson, Jerry Lawler, Sgt. Slaughter, Jim Ross, and Vince McMahon. None of these men did anything that bad to you. Johnson seemed well on his way to defeating Owen Hart for the Intercontinental title, then you ran into the ring and gave him a "stunner." Wouldn't you have been happy to see him beat Owen?

A: There's not a damn thing that anybody can do, including Ahmed Johnson, that can make "Stone-Cold" happy. I'm only happy when I'm doing the butt-kickin'. Owen Hart's sorry carcass was gonna be mine and nobody was gonna stand in my way.





"Just because I got dropped on my head doesn't mean I'm gonna stick my damn head in the sand. If some of these punks want to prove something, I'm damn sure gonna give 'em a chance."

broadcasters. Or do you have some kind of vendetta against Ross and McMahon that the public doesn't know about?

A: Not really. Jim Ross and Vince McMahon were just standing there with those damn goofy looks on their faces, askin' a bunch of stupid questions, kind of like what you're doin' right now. If you ain't careful, you might be eatin' a little floor before this is over.

Q: I'm hoping it won't come to that. But you're acting almost like a vigilante when it comes to settling old scores and putting people in their places. Aren't you at all worried about reinjuring your neck?

A: Sure, I'm worried, but I ain't scared! Just because I got dropped on my head doesn't mean I'm gonna stick my damn head in the sand. If some of these punks want to prove something, I'm damn sure gonna give 'em a chance.

Q: But your own physician is concerned about your physical condition. When I interviewed Dr. Joseph Torg for the January 1998 issue of *INSIDE WRESTLING*, he was, and I'll quote him exactly, "still reserving judgment" on whether you should return. He said your only defense against being paralyzed again would be to prevent your head from being rammed into the mat again. That won't be an easy task since your injury has been well-publicized.

A: No thanks to you. You went hog-wild asking my doctor a bunch of questions that weren't any of your damn business ...



Steve Austin teamed with Shawn Michaels briefly last year, but they've also had a few matches. Since Austin is I-C champ and supposedly the top contender to Michaels' World title, they could meet again soon.

Q: But you did give us permission to speak with Dr. Torg ...

A: I gave you permission, but I didn't think you were gonna tell the whole world everything you could get your hands on! You're damn lucky I didn't come looking for you, Lenker, Anderson, Burkett, whatever the hell your name is. It was bad enough havin' Apter snappin' pictures in my face, cluckin' away like a mother hen while the doctor was tryin' to do an examination. That'll be the last time you jokers get one over on "Stone-Cold"!

Q: A while ago, we were discussing The Hart Foundation. What do you think of Bret Hart's departure from the WWF?

A: If you want me to badmouth Bret Hart, I'm not gonna do it. I'm not gonna give you a cute little headline just so you can sell magazines. Bret's not in the WWF anymore, so how the hell does that affect my life? Not at all. Case closed.

Q: Of course, you wanted to see Owen wearing the Intercontinental belt at Survivor Series. You had the title in mind, too, didn't you?

A: Damn right, I did, son. I beat Owen in that "kiss-my-ass" match at SummerSlam, so that Intercontinental title belonged to me. It was just a matter of takin' back what was mine.

Q: Have you gained a full measure of revenge against Owen?

A: That Canadian dimwit is still walkin' around and breathin', ain't he? Yeah, I got back at Owen Hart, I made his life a livin' hell, but I ain't through with him. Not by a longshot. He's still got a lot more dues to pay.

Q: All this is well and fine, but it doesn't really explain why you gave "stunners" to Jim Ross and Vince McMahon. After all, they were just doing their jobs as

Q: Okay, let's address other matters. Do The Nation of Domination's race-baiting antics offend you?

A: What the hell does that have to do with Steve Austin? You don't know up from down, son! I go out there and talk about kicking butts every night of the week and you ask if something offends me? I don't care whether my opponents are black, white, or purple. The only thing that offends "Stone-Cold" is when somebody's dumb enough to cross my path and get in my way.

Q: Like Rocky Maivia?

A: Yeah, just like Rocky Maivia. He comes out all jacked like he's somethin' special, makin' a challenge to "Stone-Cold," and expects to walk away without his butt being handed to him. That ain't gonna happen. He claims to have been "the best damn Intercontinental champion there ever

was." That's a laugh. It makes me laugh my damn head off! I'm gonna send that young punk cryin' to his daddy before it's over.

Q: Why don't we discuss a potential challenger to your Intercontinental title who has made a few waves since returning to the WWF? Jeff Jarrett, a former champ, says he is offended by the term "Austin 3:16." Should he be?

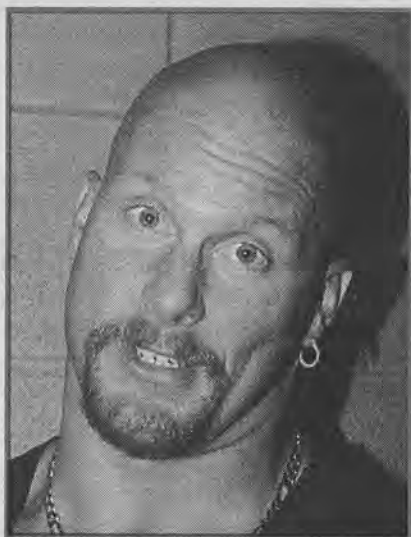
A: I don't care what offends Jeff Jarrett. If it offends him, let him do something about it. If there's one thing I can't stand it's a whiny crybaby.

Q: What other career aspirations do you have? Are you going to challenge the new WWF World champion, Shawn Michaels?

A: Maybe, maybe not.

Q: Do you approve of Michaels' juvenile behavior as of late? You know him better than most, since the two of you did hold the WWF World tag team title together briefly.

A: Yeah, but Shawn Michaels skipped town with his tail between his legs when things didn't go his way. He had more of a problem with Bret Hart at the time, but he left me in the lurch without a partner. It's a sad day when a hippie reject like Dude Love had more guts than he did. Right now, I got no problem with Mi-



"Right now, I got no problem with Michaels or any of that DX crap. He'd just better not [tick] me off or he'll get himself a 'Stone-Cold stunner.'"

chels or any of that DX crap. He'd just better not [tick] me off or he'll get himself a "Stone-Cold stunner."

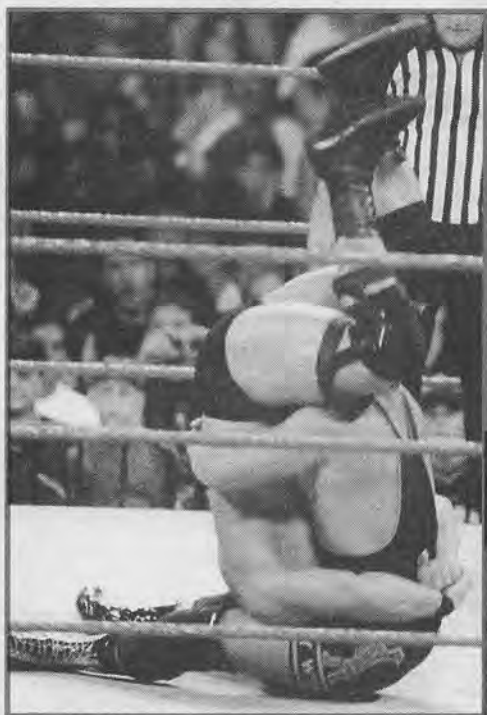
Q: Your no-nonsense attitude has made you the most popular competitor in the WWF. Have you learned to appreciate your cult following more?

A: It's like I said all along: I don't give a damn if they cheer, boo, or jump up and down like a bunch of idiots. But "Stone-

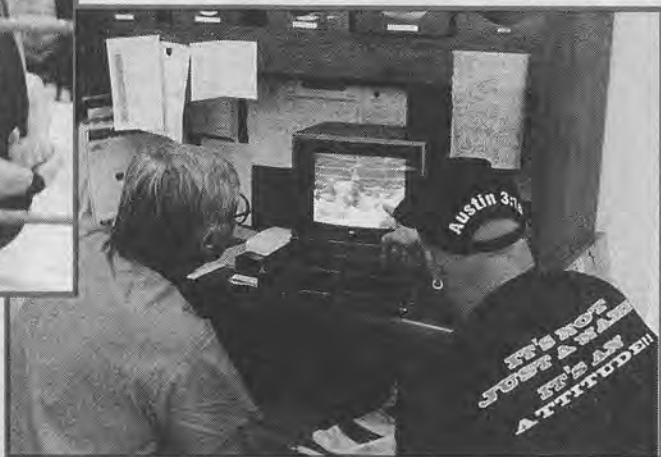
Cold" is gonna give 'em one hell of a match every time he steps in the ring—and that's the bottom line.

Q: Thank you for your time, Steve.

A: Yeah, now let me get the hell out of here. □

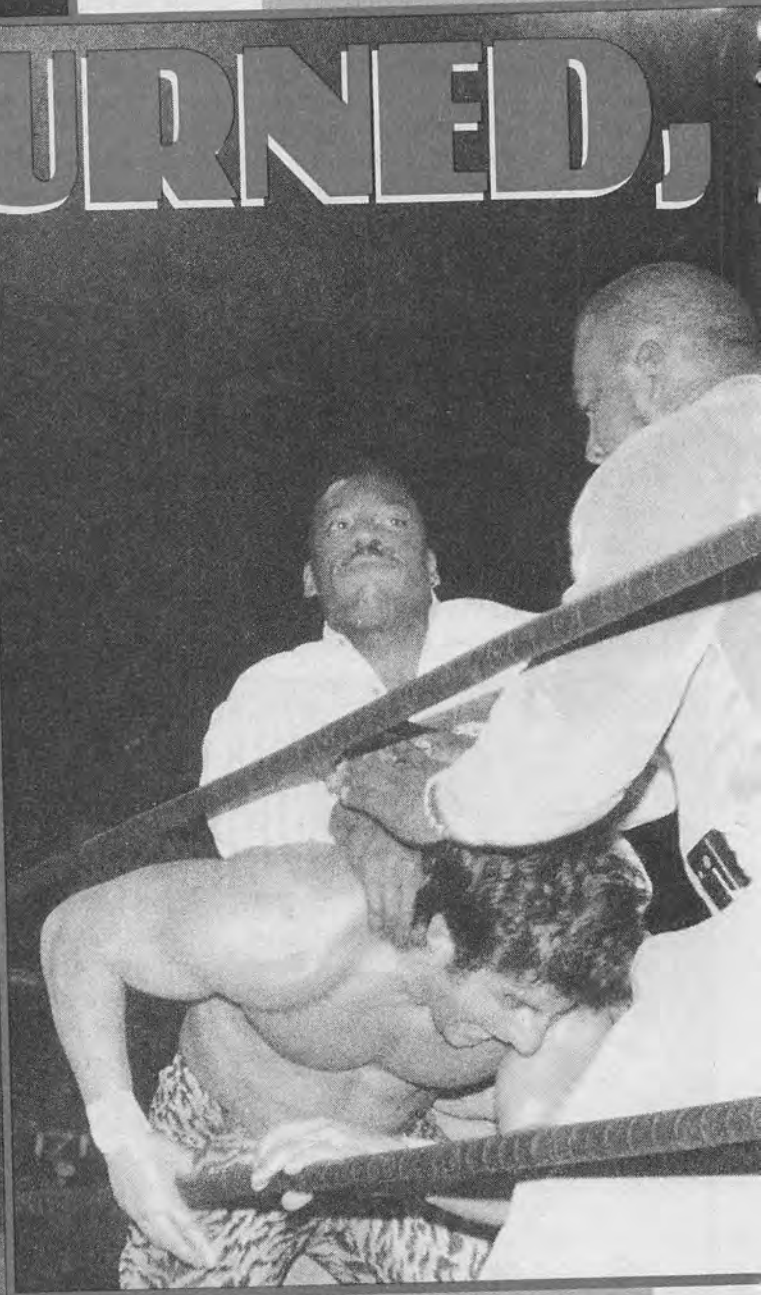


One "tombstone" piledriver by Owen Hart nearly ended Austin's career (above). But after consulting with Dr. Joseph Torg (right), Austin decided he was ready to wrestle again. So far so good.



ABUSED,

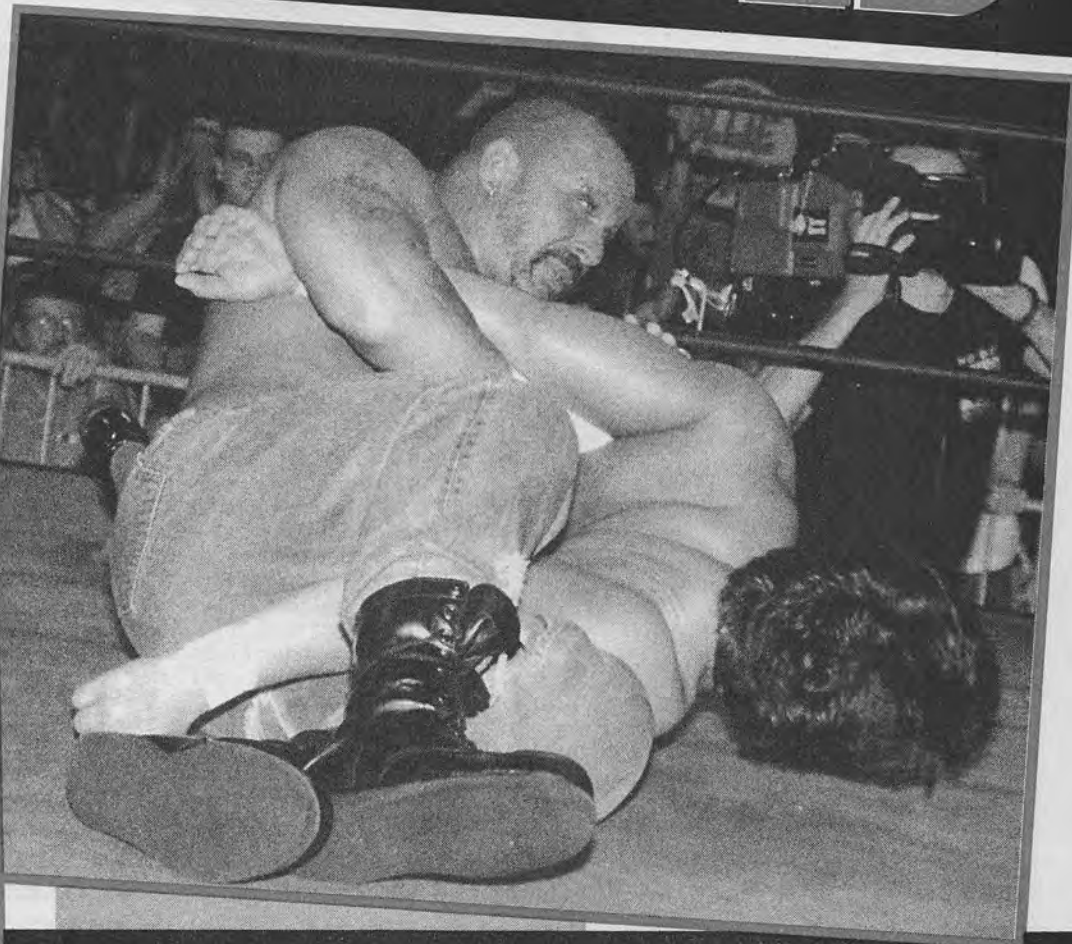
BURNED,



Photos by Bill Apter

Getting bodyslammed by Jacquelyn (above left), that hurt. Being viciously double-teamed by Harlem Heat (above). Ouch! Being forced to submit and give up your WCW TV title by Perry Saturn (opposite page, right). Yikes! It was a lousy night for Disco.

& STRIPPED



The Worst Night Of Disco Inferno's Life

A diminutive but powerful woman, an angry tag team, and a former Eliminator all humbled Disco Inferno on the same WCW card. Would you believe he was still upbeat at the end of the evening?

By Dan Murphy

NOVEMBER 3, 1997. In one night, Disco Inferno gets battered by Jacquelyn, beaten by Harlem Heat, and dethroned by Perry Saturn. What's a former WCW TV champ to do?

"Hey, pal, time to get moving. We gotta get this place cleaned up!"

The man to whom that statement was directed didn't move. The

reporter seated at his right in an empty locker room in the bowels of the CoreStates Spectrum in Philadelphia gave the janitor a feeble smile. The truth is, he wanted Disco Inferno to come out of his funk so he could complete his interview and head home for the night.

The janitor shook his head and ambled off. A small digital clock



Disco almost seemed to be laughing when Jacquelyn wrenched his wrist (above). He wasn't feeling so good when Jackie used a flying bodypress on him (left). Little did he know things would get much worse.



ended all the speculation when he returned to WCW in September and got into a dispute with TV champ Alex Wright over who was a better dancer.

Shockingly, the man who at one

point carried detailed diagrams of how to apply submission holds into the ring with him found himself with a WCW belt around his waist. By pinning Wright, he became the new WCW TV champion and was soon defending his belt against some of the world's top wrestlers.

Then Disco Inferno came to Philadelphia.

The night started well enough. He avenged the most embarrassing loss of his career, a Halloween Havoc trouncing to Jacquelyn, with a clean victory in a match held before *Monday Nitro* went on the air. He

realized that he was in a no-win situation. If he won, well, he was supposed to win. He was a man wrestling a woman after all. But if he lost *again* ... it would have more than he would have been able to take.

"I was raised never to hit girls," Disco said. "That was just something you didn't do. I had no idea of how to defend myself against a woman who would do everything to humiliate me. Then when you have a woman like Jacquelyn hit you with a huge DDT ... I hate to say it, but I was fighting for my life out there tonight!"

If Disco wasn't fighting for his life during the bout with Jacquelyn, he certainly seemed to be *after* the match. After taking about as much from Jacquelyn as he was going to, Disco finished the match in a shockingly cruel manner: with his version of a "Stone-Cold stunner." Everything might have been all right had he not gloated over his accomplishment. But he did, and Harlem Heat, watching on a monitor in the dressing room, didn't like it one bit. They stormed the ring and launched a full-scale attack. The exhausted and unsuspecting champion was no match for Booker T and Stevie Ray. When the beating was over, a disoriented Disco staggered back to the locker room.

Disco immediately sought out Executive Committee Chairman J.J. Dillon and asked that his match scheduled later on against Saturn be canceled. He was not happy with Dillon's ruling. "He told me unless the doctor deemed me unfit to compete, the match goes on," Disco said.

"That match against Jacquelyn was his own idea," Dillon told *INSIDE WRESTLING*. "He challenged her backstage because he wanted to save face after losing to her at Halloween Havoc. I told him I'd get him the match, but that there would be no room on the TV program for it. He told me that was fine with him, that he wanted to show the crowd in Philadelphia what a real man he is. We had a contract for a televised TV

plugged in over the porcelain sink glowing a scarlet signal.

1:12 a.m.

"It wasn't supposed to be like this," Disco finally muttered.

That was for sure. Disco Inferno had spent several years working his way up through independent promotions before finally getting his break in WCW in 1996. His carefree attitude made him a cult hero to WCW fans.

When Disco disappeared from WCW, fans not only noticed, but placed bets as to when he'd first appear in the WWF. But Disco

title match, and I saw fit to let the match go on. I stand firmly behind my decision."

"I was ripped off!" Disco loudly concluded.

In the final analysis, maybe he was, but that doesn't change the fact that Saturn took him apart. The one-time Eliminator methodically worked on Disco's left arm before applying his "Rings Of Saturn" submission hold on the limb. Though Disco relinquished his title, he was anything but a quitter on that night, and he earned the respect of more than a few of his peers.

"I was very surprised Disco even went back out there and put his belt on the line," Glacier admitted. "You should have seen him when he came back to the locker room after Harlem Heat got finished with him. He looked like death warmed over."

"I told him not to go out there," Chris Benoit said. "I knew what a guy like Saturn was capable of doing to Disco on his best day, let alone when he can barely walk. He showed me something."

Despite the praise he received from his associates in the locker room, Disco was still shattered that his run as champion had been so brief.

"It took an awful lot of work to even get a shot at the TV title," Disco said, finally lifting his head. "I'd be damned if I was going to just give that belt up after going through what I just went through."

"I could have done a lot more," he said after a long pause. "I was finally getting some respect. Now here I am in Philadelphia, at almost 1:30 in the morning, without a title belt!"

Disco fired a boot across the locker room, knocking the clock to the tiled floor with a resounding crash. He stood up and began to get dressed, starting with a garish powder-blue polyester shirt, followed by white flared pants. The janitor suspiciously poked his head into the locker room, but turned back at the reporter's wave.

"I'm sorry," Disco said. "I just

Disco put up a good effort against Saturn even though he had to be less than 100 percent healthy. Saturn was just too much for him in the end, however. Disco was depressed when the night was over, but not for long.



tempo. It was as if he were a completely different person.

"Let me tell you what's next, Mr. Reporter," Disco barked. "Nobody's going to keep me down, not Saturn or Jackie or Harlem Heat. Not nobody, baby! I will survive, because you know as long as I've got peace of mind, you know I can get

by," Disco said, quoting the Gloria Gaynor 1970s hit.

The janitor returned to the locker room intent on locking up. Disco grabbed the janitor as his mop fell to the floor. He struggled to get free of Disco grip, but Disco held him for a quick Electric Slide before he managed to free himself and scamper off, leaving his mop behind.

"You know something, baby?" Disco asked. "Disco will survive. I will survive. I will stay alive!"

With that, Disco collected his bags and ran from the locker room singing a Bee Gees tune to the utter dismay of the janitorial staff.

Burn, baby, burn. □

had a bad night. The worst night of my life. You got anymore questions?"

"Yes. What's next?"

Disco stopped and considered the question. It was as if he had forgotten that there would even be a "next" after the pain and humiliation of that night.

He walked over to the sink and stooped to pick up the clock he had knocked to the floor. He plugged the clock back in and watched as "12:00" flashed in the display window like the dawn of a new day. Slowly, a smile crossed his lips.

"What's next for the Disco Inferno? What's next, you say?" His voice picked up in volume and

The telephone wires sizzle each month, as two top wrestlers voice their rage and hostility toward each other. Here's the unedited transcript of their conversation, your chance to feel the raw emotion that results when two antagonists face off ...

One On One

WHAT SHAWN MICHAELS is Ken Shamrock is not. Michaels is glitz and glamour; Shamrock is all business. It seems everything Michaels does is meant to either please or infuriate the fans; Shamrock looks inward for inspiration. Michaels has an entourage; Shamrock is a loner.

All that is probably why these two men can't stand each other. There are a few things, however, they have in common. They are both terrific wrestlers. Michaels has held several major titles, foremost among them the WWF World championship. Not only has Shamrock won the Ultimate Fighting Championship, but he's been called the world's most dangerous man.

They also are both fierce competitors. Michaels proved his tenacity by winning three WWF World titles in the last two years. As for Shamrock, he wasn't in the WWF long before his foes realized he had the mental and physical skills to be a pro wrestler.

The current dispute between Michaels and Shamrock really heated up on a recent edition of the WWF's *Raw Is War*. First Michaels hit the ring with the other members of DeGeneration X: Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Chyna, and (at the time) Rick Rude. After Shamrock came out and began taunting the four of them, WWF Commissioner Sgt. Slaughter announced Helmsley would have to face Shamrock later that night. In the end, Michaels' interference cost Shamrock a clean victory.

In this feud, Shamrock is inspired by the fact that Michaels holds the World championship, but he is also determined to shut up his arrogant opponent. Michaels is eager to silence this contender and prove he's just as tough as "the world's most dangerous man." Aside from the ring, what better forum could there be for them than ... "One On One."

ONE ON ONE



"I look forward to showing you over and over why I'm the heavyweight champion of the world ... That UFC stuff is serious business. But it's not wrestling the way I've known wrestling for 15 years."

—Shawn Michaels

SHAWN MICHAELS: Well, well, well. If it isn't Mr. Tough Guy of the Universe. Good thing we're not meeting in person here. You'd probably try to beat me up. Hey, tough guy, how ya doin' today? Everything okay in Toughland?

KEN SHAMROCK: Everything's cool with me, pal. It's you I'm not so sure about. I'm never too sure about a guy who needs to surround himself with thugs.

SM: Not hardly, Ken. You wish you had people like DeGeneration X watching your back. You wish you could be a certified degenerate just like us. I'm not gonna apologize to anybody about my good friends. All of them are successes in their own right. They don't need to be hanging around with me. They're here because they want to be here. I'm not forcing them to stay in my corner. They want to be here because DX is where it's at.

KS: Yeah, you don't have to force them. They're going where the gold is.

SM: Hey, they were here before I won this WWF belt and before I won the European belt!

KS: Yeah, they were, but they were waiting for you to produce. What do you think's going to happen when you lose?

N ONE



"I don't think you represent the WWF well at all. You know I respect you as an athlete. I'd be foolish not to. But as a man, it's a different story. You're more than a joke; you're a disgrace!"
—Ken Shamrock

SM: Lose? "The Heartbreak Kid" goes down to no one, Ken, and that's including you, the world's most dangerous man.

KS: I know this may come as a shock to you, but not even the great Shawn Michaels can hold the belt forever. Heck, you may not even hold it for six months. The competition here in the WWF is just too good, and I'll put myself right at the top of the list. The only problem is getting a match with you when the rest of your little group isn't around to save you. What about it, tough guy?

SM: Hey, I don't run away from anybody. Just take a look at the people I've wrestled. Only an idiot would say I've been ducking the competition, but I guess that's maybe what I'm dealing with here, huh, Ken? By the way, you're doing pretty well here so far. You're putting together some complete sentences. I'm not afraid to take you on, Shamrock. I don't care if you were the KFC champion ...

KS: UFC champion. Get it right.

SM: Oh, excuse me. Sorry if I offended you, big man. Whatever or whoever you are or were, you're welcome to step through the ropes against me anytime, and I'll guarantee you a fair fight.

KS: For how long? Until you're in a little trouble, right? You're always putting obstacles in my way. Let's talk about that freak Hunter Hearst Helmsley.

SM: What is there to say? Triple-H is one of the best wrestlers in the world. I only surround myself with the best.

KS: Oh, I don't doubt his abilities. I doubt his motivation. He wants to wrestle me, that's fine. I've already made the man tap out a few times. You ought to know that. But I don't appreciate him fighting your battles.

SM: Triple-H is his own man, and he's a man who can take you any day of the week. Why don't you just stop making excuses and start fighting?

KS: I'd fight him again anytime if you'd stop interfering! If he's as good as you say, he wouldn't need you throwing him suitcases. Truth is, he knows I can outwrestle him. He's looking for the interference. He helps you out, and you help him out. Good deal.

SM: It's called loyalty, Ken! I know that's pretty big word, and I'll spell it for you later if you need me to. The members of DeGeneration X are loyal to one another.

KS: I value loyalty, too, but not on your terms. That's bogus.

SM: You're just afraid to acknowledge the greatness of DeGeneration X.

KS: Greatness? Yeah, right. I don't see much greatness there. After Helmsley you have that man, woman, whatever she is ...

SM: Listen, pal, that woman could kick your butt with no problem! Why do you have so much trouble respecting Chyna? Could a big tough guy like Ken Shamrock be scared of her? Women in authority scare you? Just deal with it!

KS: I'll deal with her the same way I've dealt with Helmsley if I have to.

SM: Hey, Ken, I look forward to it. I look forward to showing you over and over why I'm the heavyweight champion of the world! Yeah, you're good, damn good. You know I have the *utmost* respect for you. That UFC stuff is serious business. But it's not wrestling the way I've known wrestling for 15 years. And now you've reached the highest levels of this sport. Sure you're ready for a full-blown war with me?

KS: I've been ready all my life, Michaels. I'm especially ready to take on you. Truth is, I don't think you represent the WWF well at all. You know I respect you as an athlete. I'd be foolish not to. But as a man, it's a different story. You're more than a joke; you're a disgrace! I look forward to the day when I can represent this organization with some dignity.

SM: Ooooooh, the tears are flowing! That was a nice little speech, but I think I've heard it before from someone else. And it has nothing to do with reality. I promise you this will be settled in the ring. Then there won't be any doubts as to who the real champion is.

KS: I agree with you there, man. I don't agree with you on much, but I'll agree with you there. □

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Sincerely Yours

(Continued from page 5)



Hulk Hogan pounds away at Lex Luger during a match held this summer. Though Hogan has only occasionally defended the WCW belt, reader Ryan McFarland thinks he has been criticized too much.

Luger had lost that night? He would have gotten another chance at Road Wild. Why should Luger get two shots in one week and Hogan not even get a rematch?

I hope the fans start showing Hogan a little more respect and try to remember what he did for this industry.

RYAN McFARLAND
Middletown, RI



Is this outfit worn by Francine too revealing? Reader George Connor doesn't think so. He didn't like it when we suggested that Shane Douglas' cheerleader get a new wardrobe.

WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

For the life of me, I can't see anything wrong with Francine's clothing and absolutely no reason for "Inside Wrestling's Holiday Wish List" to include a new wardrobe for her (January 1998). Francine has a great body and should show it off as much as she wants. I know I won't stop her from revealing a little flesh while at ringside with Shane Douglas. She has a unique sense of style that many of today's valets and managers are lacking. Most other females just blend in, but Francine stands out. Sure, she's not a classic beauty, but then not every guy wants to have a Barbie doll beauty queen.

GEORGE CONNOR
Westville, NJ ☐

This Month In...

Wrestler

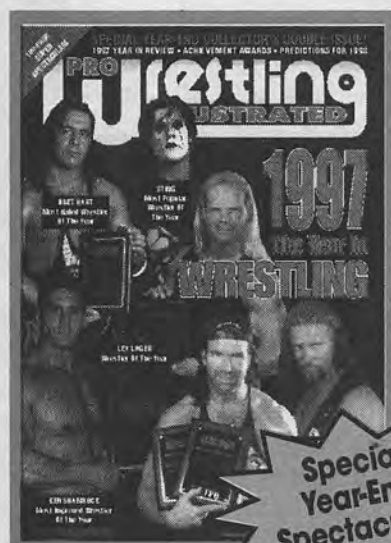


We have the wildest, the wackiest, the silliest, the most ridiculous, and the most unbelievable wrestling photos taken this year. It's our annual photographic look back at the year in wrestling: "The Year In Pictures" ... Are you creative? Do you have artistic ability? Are you a fan of **REY MISTERIO JR.**? If you answered "yes" to all three, you could win an autographed Misterio mask! We'll tell what you must do ... **THE UNDERTAKER** needed a break from dealing with **PAUL BEARER** and **KANE** this fall, but why did he go to Japan and wrestle **HAKUSHI**?

All this—and much more!—
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All this—and much more!—
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NOW ON SALE!

On The Road

(Continued from page 10)

ing to entertain the fans and have them come back and bring people with them. That's what it's really all about. This is grassroots wrestling at its best. Nobody here is a millionaire."

"There's just something about fans in Tennessee," said Flanagan. "They get so into it. I get booed by a lot of fans in a lot of different areas, and I don't care what most people think, but when people at these cards boo, you can tell that they really can't stand the sight of you. There's a real passion there."

The sport needs more vibrant independents. The NWA is fine, with veterans such as Dan Severn, Dory Funk Jr., King Kong Bundy, and Steve Keirn, and young stars such as Devon Storm, Ace Darling, and Reckless Youth, but not enough people see the NWA. Music City Wrestling has life-long viewers.

That's why I'm offering the following suggestion: For the good of wrestling, if you are anywhere near Nashville on a Saturday night, you should attend a Music City Wrestling card. You'll have a good time. Colorado Kid is a great wrestler to watch. Watching Colorado Kid on a Saturday night almost beats watching Lex Luger on a Saturday night.

"I underestimated Colorado Kid for a long time," Jerry Lawler said. "That's probably why he beat me. But I don't think anybody's underestimating him anymore. Let me tell you something, if not for the independents, I would've never gotten as big as I am as fast as I did. I'm not ashamed to say I owe a lot to the people of Tennessee. These are my people."

Lawler's people get into wrestling a little more than the NWO's people or the WWF's peo-



Flash Flanagan applies a chinlock on Nick Dinsmore during a Music City card. Flanagan is enjoying his time in the new federation even though he regularly gets booed by the Tennessee fans.

ple and take seriously a night at the arena. Go to a Music City Wrestling card and you'll run into a lot of people who have been watching wrestling for decades. Take Jake Simmler, an area farmer who brings his wife, three daughters, and two sons to the matches every Saturday night in Nashville.

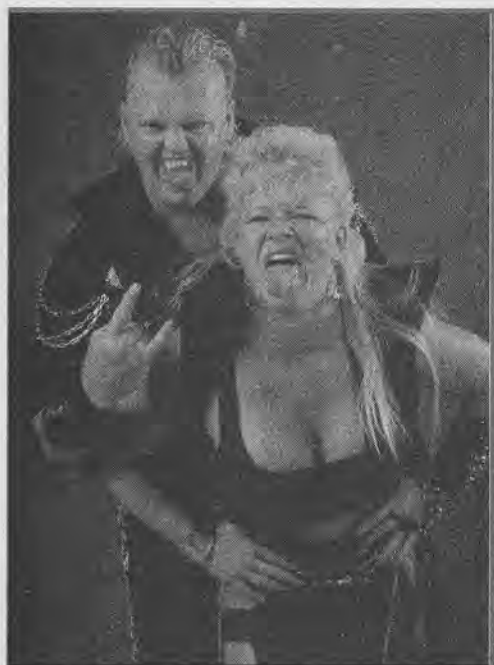
"It's worth every penny we pay for the tickets," Simmler. "You're not gonna find better entertain-

ment anywhere. These guys give it their all every time. Nothin' fancy. They just beat on each other as hard as they can for as long as they can, and you can tell they love what they're doin'. Music City has really filled a void down here with the USWA gone."

So there you have it. Straight from a Simmler's mouth. Music City Wrestling is worth checking out. □

Behind the Door

(Continued from page 12)



How strong is Luna Vachon's marriage to Vampire Warrior right now? If he ever shows up in the WWF to confront Goldust, this situation could get really ugly.

Marlena, and Luna in a triangle together ... *Yech!* Throw Vampire Warrior into the mix (why do I have a feeling we'll see him in the WWF soon?) and it gets even worse.

But here's what I make out of this: I'm not surprised that Goldust showed absolutely no loyalty to Marlena—who didn't want to be with Pillman in the first place—and fooled around with Luna while she was gone. You see, Goldust is the classic cheat. Let me assure you that there is no way, any way, that any woman could ever trust Goldust, and that includes Luna Vachon.

Of course, Luna has a better chance in this than Marlena did, because she can beat up Goldust. That's besides the point.

Goldust, the former Dustin Rhodes, comes from a dysfunctional family. His father, Dusty Rhodes, was always out on the road while Dustin was growing up. He hardly saw him. Their relationship was

more like father and brother than father and son. Then, several years ago, Dustin packed up, left WCW, and never talked to his father again. He has, in fact, not talked to his father since leaving WCW.

Dustin Rhodes is a man who doesn't know the value of long-term relationships, probably because he has never had one. Things—including people—have no value to him. He thinks he can pick up and leave anything he wants, anytime he wants.

Do I feel sorry for Marlena? No. I don't feel sorry for any woman who smokes a cigar.

Do I feel sorry for Luna Vachon? No. I don't feel sorry for any woman who could beat me up.

The person I feel sorry for is Goldust, because he is missing out on one of the most important aspects of life, the ability to conduct long-term relationships and love people. I'm not talking about, "I love you. Let's have sex." I'm talking about real love. Goldust doesn't know that and has never known it. It's sad, really. It's even sadder that a child (Goldust and Marlena's daughter, Dakota) is mixed up in this whole mess.

Goldust's search for a new identity failed him. Dustin Rhodes became Goldust. He also became successful in wrestling, but that didn't make him successful in his personal life. By any name, he's as messed up as ever.

You know, I'm really upset that Lenker suggested that I write this column, because I'm about to cry. This is really sad. Poor Goldust. I'm sure he blames his father for a lot of the problems he has encountered in life.

No surprise there: Dusty Rhodes is to blame for a lot of things.

He's the reason the mute button on my TV's remote control is wearing out. Every time Dusty talks, I can't listen.

My suggestion for Goldust is a year or two of lengthy sessions with a good psychologist. I recommend Dr. Sidney M. Basil, who is already quite familiar with his case and could probably help right away. Goldust, go see Dr. Basil. He wants to help. His rates are reasonable—\$75 an hour, including furniture.

As for you, Marlena, don't try to get him back. Don't waste your time on Goldust. Now he's Luna's problem. ☐

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The Insider

(Continued from page 14)



Sorry, Bam Bam Bigelow, but you're going to have to find a new adviser in ECW. Rick Rude is NWO now. The money he was offered must have been good, so I can't blame Rude for signing with Eric Bischoff and friends.

the money and the prestige are, and De-Generation X was not where it was at. You want money and you want to live life the right way—the sweet way—you go to the NWO. It's that simple. Timing is everything, and the NWO called at the right time."

"Does this have anything to do with the Bret Hart situation?" I inquired.

"Desperate for a headline?" he answered. "Look, no matter what, Rick Rude goes where the action is. And it wasn't in the WWF. Hulk Hogan is the true World champi-

age of long-term, lucrative contracts full of no-compete clauses.

Tuesday morning, I couldn't resist. One of my sources got me the room number of the hotel in which Rude stayed following his *Nitro* debut, so I decided to give the "Ravishing One" a little wake-up call.

A groggy Rude answered the phone. "Who's the dead man who's calling me so damn early?" were his first words.

"Not a man, Rick, and check your watch. It's 10:07 a.m.," I responded. "It's Brandi."

"Brandi?" Rude answered. "I know a lot of women named Brandi. In fact, I think I met one or two last night."

I thought I heard a woman giggling in the background.

"You know which Brandi—the only one that matters in wrestling," I shot back.

"Yeah, I know. I suppose you want to know what I was doing last night on both shows. Quite a feat of speed and stamina, wasn't it? The WWF didn't know what hit them. WCW didn't know what hit them. And the NWO picked up a premiere personality."

"Hold it right there, Rick," I said, interrupting his diatribe. "Sunday night, you were at a WWF show, and from what I heard, you seemed pretty happy to be there."

"Like I said last night, what a difference 24 hours can make. I got a call from 'Easy E' himself with an offer that I just couldn't refuse. I am now with the originator, the New World Order."

"Yeah, I noticed that you didn't exactly have kind things to say about your former friends in DeGeneration X."

"Let's just say that I woke up and smelled the coffee. I go where

on. He's beat the best and he proudly leads the greatest wrestling organization going today. I want to be part of it.

"Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to work on a rude awakening for my guests. Ring me again if I can be of any more service."

I never did get to ask him if he still planned on showing up in ECW, where he had been an adviser to Bam Bam Bigelow, but judging from the fact that he was already using the word 'sweet' and heaping the praise on Hogan, I figured he was planning on being exclusively NWO from now on.

For a guy who hasn't been an active wrestler since 1994, Rude sure did a good job of shaking up three major promotions in the span of a few days. For one night he was *the* talk of this sport. How interesting. How unbelievable.

How so very Rude. □

On Assignment

(Continued from page 16)

While this weighs heavily on my brain, I'm trying to recall better days for the USWA. I remember tag team title reigns that lasted mere days and never longer than a few months. I kind of enjoyed seeing so many title changes. From The Moondogs to PG-13 to The Fabulous Ones, many veterans and up-and-comers found enormous success away from the spotlight of the major federations.

I remember the emergence of men like Sid Vicious, Jeff Jarrett, and Brian Christopher. All men who learned a lot about what it takes to become a great wrestler in the Memphis ring wars. Sid came in as a gawky monster who needed to find a way to refine his skills. Jarrett was the 98-pound weakling whom many others underestimated. Christopher was ... well ... Christopher. He came into this business cocky and has never really changed much.

I remember, as I said before, the Mid-South Coliseum, which became a mecca for wrestling in that area. So many up-and-coming wrestlers would dream about competing before packed houses of passionate Southern wrestling fans not jaded by the influence of WCW and the WWF. Even up until the very end, the USWA reminded us of what wrestling was like before ol' Vince Jr. came along.

I remember so many of Jerry



The USWA not only provided fans with spirited action, it gave aspiring wrestlers a chance to refine their raw skills. Former USWA mainstay Jeff Jarrett (shown vs. Steve Keirn in 1991) has become a national star.

Lawler's USWA heavyweight title wins. To some, the fact that he won and lost that belt so many times made Lawler a joke. I believe it showed the resolve of a wrestler who is more than a cartoonish "Burger King" in the WWF. In Memphis, he was a hero to so many (still is). He bragged about being the big fish in the little pond. But even when that fish swam upstream to a larger pond in Stamford, many of his loyal fans continued to stand behind him. How ironic. Once perceived as a threat, the WWF became a safety net for "The King" once his beloved USWA went by the wayside.

Even more ironic is that the USWA killed the USWA. Lawsuits and legal actions did more damage than a national promotion ever could. The battle was not won or lost in the ring, but in the quiet confines of a courtroom.

The USWA wasn't the oldest promotion in the world, but it was so very rich in history. I'll remember the moment that Jeff Jarrett challenged Bret Hart before most fans outside of Tennessee even knew who he was. I'll remember Eddie Gilbert's brutality in hitting Lawler with a car. I'll remember Andy Kaufman's invasion. I'll remember Terry Funk and Lawler's bloody battles. I'll remember how ecstatic The Colorado Kid was when he pulled off his

stunning upset of Lawler for the USWA title.

Yes, I have these memories of a promotion I consider ripe with tradition. Tradition means very little to most wrestlers out there today, but to me, it is something to cherish.

So many memories. Unfortunately, that's how they will remain. There is a new upstart promotion taking the USWA's place; it's called Music City Wrestling. Many of the former USWA stars are already wrestling in it. Will it take the USWA's place? Physically, yes, it probably will. But it will never replace the USWA. No promotion could. □

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April 1990: Starrcade '89: Night Of The Iron Men.

Also: Warrior-Hogan, Dustin Rhodes, Buzz Sawyer, WWF shuffle.

May 1990: WrestleMania VI Main Event: Hulk Hogan vs. Ultimate Warrior: Exclusive Preview & Analysis.

Also: Jerry Lawler, Al Perez, Lex Luger, Woman, LPWA.

June 1990: Tragedy Strikes Sting! How You Can Help Speed His Recovery.

Also: Saito-Zbyszko, Earthquake, Ultimate Warrior, Jeff Jarrett.

Also: Steiners, Sting, Earthquake, Kokina Maximus, Tessa.

August 1990: The Experts Agree: Lex Luger Has Made Ric Flair A Broken Man.

Also: Hulk Hogan, Ultimate Warrior, Pillman & Zenk, Terry Taylor, Jerry Lawler.

September 1990: Fighting Fire With Fire: The Awesome Foursome—Committed To Destroying The Horsemen.

Also: Hulk Hogan, Hackshaw Duggan, JYD, Adams-Jeannie, Midnight Express.

October 1990: Sting: "I Feel Like I've Conquered The World!"

Also: Legion of Doom, Bushwhackers, El Gigante, Mike Rotundo, Juice Patrol.

November 1990: Ric Flair & Hulk Hogan: A Tale Of Two Ex-Champions.

Also: Sid Vicious, Sgt. Slaughter, Jeannie-Toni, Mr. Fuji & Orient Express.

December 1990: Halloween Havoc Horror! Why Sting Is Spooked By Sid Vicious.

Also: Hulk Hogan, Kerry Von Erich, Jim Cornette, Larry Zbyszko.

January 1991: Warning To The Ultimate Warrior: The Legion Of Doom Will Lead You To Destruction.

Also: Paul E. Dangerously, Chris Adams, Steiners, Lawler-T. Funk.

February 1991: Our Plan For The "Hulkster" To Regain The WWF World Belt.

Also: Terry Taylor, Rick Martel, Sting & Simmons, all-annoying, Stan Hansen.

March 1991: The Earthquake Feud Rumbles On: Will Hulk Hogan Be The Victim Of His Own Deadly Obsession?

Also: Roberts-Martel, Sting-Hansen, Keim-Perez, Barry Windham.

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Also: Eddie Gilbert, Flair-Sting, Steiners, Roddy Piper, Larry Zbyszko, Sgt. Slaughter.

May 1991: Savage vs. Warrior: The Bloodlust Of Ex-Champions.

Also: Steiners, Sting, Virgil, D. Sammartino-I. Koloff.

June 1991: Steiners, LOD: Tag Team Thunder.

Also: Steve Williams, Nikita Koloff, I-C belt, Dundees, Ann Anderson.

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Also: Alexandra York, Simmons-Luger, Lane & Cornette, Leatherface.

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Also: Freebirds, Blackhearts, Bret Hart, Dusty Rhodes, Mike Rotundo.

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November 1992: The Great American Crash: Vader Crushes Sting For The WCW World Title. Also: Ric Flair, Ultimate Warrior, Madusa, Warlord & Barbarian-Bushwhackers, top rope rule.

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NWA Title Claimant Terry Funk Demands Recognition . . .

BUT WE DEMAND HE BE BANNED!

INSIDE WRESTLING CLASSIC!

Everybody, it seems, loves 53-year-old warrior Terry Funk today, but he did a lot of heinous things in the past. And he got a lot of people mad at him. Need an example? Just read this "Inside Wrestling Classic" from 15 years ago!



THE REGISTERED LETTER from Terry Funk arrived in the midst of a busy day at the offices of *Inside Wrestling*. But when the contents of the letter became known, all work came to a halt. Nobody could believe what Funk had done, and everyone wanted the opportunity to read the letter for themselves:

Dear Sirs:

This is to inform the promoters and the sports media throughout the world that I have repeatedly been denied a chance at the NWA heavyweight championship. I feel that I have been personally discriminated against due to my superior wrestling ability.

Moguls, millionaires, and conglomerate corporations of the profession have avoided my

talents. I feel that Ric Flair is inferior to me in every way. Therefore, as of October 26, 1982, I am laying claim to the title.

I am now taking bookings as the NWA heavyweight champion (claimant). If you wish dates, pictures, or tapes on such a talented person as myself, please contact me by phone or letter at my home or office.

Sincerely,

Terry Funk

NWA Champion (Claimant)

"Can Funk be serious?" asked Associate Editor Rich Countis. "Does he know what he's doing?"

"I'm afraid he knows exactly what he's doing," Associate Editor Craig Peters responded. "And that's what worries me."

Terry Funk waves for the camera as he strolls through New York City streets following his press conference (above). Funk is wearing a replica of the NWA championship belt around his waist. Feeling as powerful as, and perhaps even more important than, a champion, Funk poses boldly in front of the Rockefeller Center ice rink (below).



Funk proudly displays his replica NWA belt everywhere he goes in New York City, even in the middle of the street (below). Funk is satisfied with the way his press conference, held at the RCA Building in Rockefeller Center, informed the media of his championship status (right).

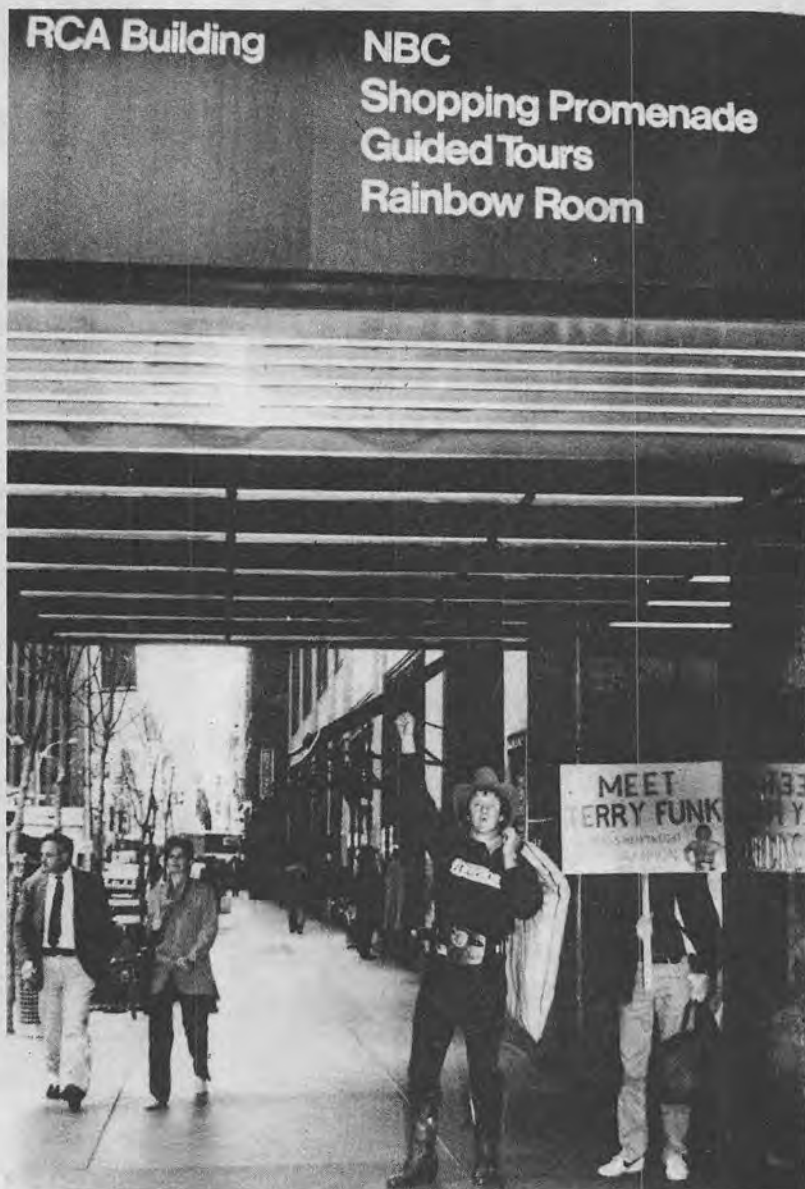


Then Senior Editor Bill Apter entered the conversation. "I just got off the phone with Terry Funk," said Apter, "and we've got to move fast. He's in New York today and he'll be holding a press conference at Rockefeller Center late this afternoon."

When *Inside Wrestling's* reporters and photographers arrived at Rockefeller Center in the heart of New York City, Funk was out on the streets surrounded by a large crowd.

"What you doing in New York, Funk, you gonna wrestle Backlund?" asked one man in the crowd.

"Hell, man, I'll wrestle Backlund anytime he wants," said Funk.



"Anytime, anywhere. I'm ready, because I'm the champ, and the champion is always ready to defend his belt."

Around the waist of Terry Funk was the replica of the NWA belt that he had made for himself. Funk was proud of his belt, and he posed several times for photographers as if in fact it were the one and only championship belt.

Funk's press conference was short and to the point. Essentially, he restated the points he made in his letter to the media, but he also noted that several managers and wrestlers had contacted him regarding his claim to the belt.

"I've spoken to certain people over the telephone," Funk said,

"and I'm well aware that in certain circles of the wrestling world, people are worried about me. They think I'm a madman. But I also want to point out that I have received several offers of big money to defend my belt in various parts of the world. I'm not at liberty to say who I will be defending my belt against, because the ink hasn't been placed on the contracts yet. But as soon as it is, I'll let everyone know."

What about Ric Flair, the man who is recognized worldwide as the legitimate NWA champion?

"Flair has been dodging me for as long as he's had the title," said Funk, "and it's all because he knows that as soon as he steps in

INSIDE WRESTLING

the ring with me, he's gonna walk out of that ring a former champion. I challenge him here and now, and I hope he reads about this press conference somewhere: Flair, if you're there, let's wrestle, boy. I'm ready, I'm not afraid of you. Can you look yourself straight in the mirror at night and honestly say that you're not afraid of me?"

Dory Funk Jr. was contacted by phone in order to get his reaction to his brother's actions. "I always knew Terry was crazy," said Dory, "but I never thought he was this crazy. He's gone off his rocker! But I do agree that he deserves the opportunity to wrestle Flair."

NWA President Bob Geigel, in New York for business reasons, was present at Funk's press conference. "I'm not sure yet how the NWA will deal with Funk officially," he said, "but I do know that some sort of action will be taken soon."

Ric Flair was unavailable for comment.

Following the press conference, wrestling referee Dick Kroll, who remained silent while reporters questioned Funk, expressed his opinions to the wrestler.

"I think what you're doing is reprehensible," Kroll told Funk.



A bystander argues with Funk, stating he has no right to claim a title he did not earn in the ring (above). Funk poses with several admirers who stopped him on the street to meet him and shake his hand (below).



Funk holds his replica NWA belt high for all to see (left). Wrestling referee Dick Kroll cannot take Funk's title claim seriously, and tells him so as the Texan boards a cab for the airport (above).

"If everyone thought the way you did, every man in wrestling would be walking around with an NWA belt or a WWF belt or an AWA belt around his waist. It would make every championship worthless.

Kroll expresses the exact sentiments of *Inside Wrestling*. Funk is tarnishing his own credibility, which is his choice. But at the same time he is tarnishing the respect of wrestling's oldest title, the NWA heavyweight championship. As a one-time holder of that title, he should be aware of the consequences of his charade. If he is not, then let the ruling bodies of wrestling deal with him as they see fit. □

OFFICIAL RATINGS

TOP 15

- 1—**SHAWN MICHAELS**
(-) WWF World champion
- 2—**CURT HENNIG**
(-) U.S. heavyweight champion
- 3—**STEVE AUSTIN**
(-) No. 2 contender: WWF World title

- 4—**DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE**
(6) No. 4 contender: WCW World title
- 5—**SHANE DOUGLAS**
(5) ECW heavyweight champion
- 6—**KEN SHAMROCK**
(8) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
- 7—**LEX LUGER**
(1) No. 5 contender: WCW World title

- 8—**THE UNDERTAKER**
(4) No. 5 contender: WWF World title
- 9—**EDDY GUERRERO**
(-) WCW cruiserweight champion
- 10—**TAKA MICHINOKU**
(-) WWF light heavyweight champion
- 11—**DISCO INFERNO**
(-) WCW TV champion

- 12—**ROCKY MAIVIA**
(-) WWF Intercontinental champion
- 13—**BAM BAM BIGELOW**
(-) No. 1 contender: ECW heavyweight title
- 14—**PERRY SATURN**
(-) No. 7 contender: WCW World title
- 15—**DUDE LOVE**
(-) No. 7 contender: WWF World title

WCW

- 1—**HULK HOGAN**
(1) 275, Venice Beach, CA
- 2—**CURT HENNIG**
(10) 235, Minneapolis, MN
- 3—**EDDY GUERRERO**
(14) 221, El Paso, TX

- 4—**DISCO INFERNO**
(-) 238, Brooklyn, NY
- 5—**DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE**
(7) 260, Tampa, FL
- 6—**LEX LUGER**
(3) 265, Chicago, IL
- 7—**THE GIANT**
(5) 430, parts unknown

- 8—**PERRY SATURN**
(-) 234, Cleveland, OH
- 9—**SCOTT HALL**
(-) 290, Miami, FL
- 10—**RIC FLAIR**
(6) 243, Charlotte, NC
- 11—**YUJI NAGATA**
(-) 220, Tokyo, Japan

- 12—**DEAN MALENKO**
(9) 216, Tampa, FL
- 13—**REY MISTERIO JR.**
(-) 140, San Diego, CA
- 14—**CHRIS BENOIT**
(15) 218, Edmonton, Alberta
- 15—**CHRIS JERICHO**
(4) 225, Vancouver, British Columbia

WWF

- 1—**SHAWN MICHAELS**
(-) 234, San Antonio, TX
- 2—**ROCKY MAIVIA**
(15) 272, Pearl City, HI
- 3—**STEVE AUSTIN**
(2) 241, Dallas, TX

- 4—**KEN SHAMROCK**
(4) 235, San Bernardino, CA
- 5—**TAKA MICHINOKU**
(-) 169, Morioka, Japan
- 6—**THE UNDERTAKER**
(3) 328, parts unknown
- 7—**KANE**
(-) 345, parts unknown

- 8—**DUDE LOVE**
(-) 277, Truth or Consequences, NM
- 9—**HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY**
(12) 279, Greenwich, CT
- 10—**VADER**
(-) 450, Denver, CO
- 11—**JEFF JARRETT**
(-) 230, Nashville, TN

- 12—**BRIAN CHRISTOPHER**
(-) 230, Memphis, TN
- 13—**MARC MERO**
(-) 235, Buffalo, NY
- 14—**GOLDUST**
(7) 254, Austin, TX
- 15—**SAVIO VEGA**
(13) 250, Vega Alta, Puerto Rico

ECW

- 1—**SHANE DOUGLAS**
(1) 240, Pittsburgh, PA
- 2—**TAZ**
(2) 248, Red Hook, NY
- 3—**BAM BAM BIGELOW**
(7) 368, Mt. Laurel, NJ

- 4—**SABU**
(4) 225, Bombay
- 5—**THE SANDMAN**
(-) 244, Philadelphia, PA
- 6—**STEVIE RICHARDS**
(-) 227, Philadelphia, PA
- 7—**TOMMY DREAMER**
(5) 245, Yonkers, NY

- 8—**ROB VAN DAM**
(6) 240, Battle Creek, MI
- 9—**CHRIS CANDIDO**
(8) 226, Carteret, NJ
- 10—**JUSTIN CREDIBLE**
(-) 225, Waterbury, CT
- 11—**AL SNOW**
(9) 232, Lima, OH

- 12—**MIKEY WHIPWRECK**
(-) 187, New York, NY
- 13—**SPIKE DUDLEY**
(10) 155, parts unknown
- 14—**AXL ROTTEN**
(15) 302, Philadelphia, PA
- 15—**JERRY LYNN**
(-) 214, Minneapolis, MN

INTERNATIONAL

- 1—**MITSU HARU MISAWA**
(1) 228, Ashikaga, Japan
- 2—**SHINYA HASHIMOTO**
(3) 287, Gifu, Japan
- 3—**TAKA MICHINOKU**
(-) 169, Morioka, Japan

- 4—**KEIJI MUTO**
(9) 245, Yamaguchi, Japan
- 5—**KENSUKE SASAKI**
(2) 233, Tokyo, Japan
- 6—**KENTA KOBASHI**
(14) 261, Fukuchiyama, Japan
- 7—**PERRO AGUAYO**
(-) 215, Zacatecas, Mexico

- 8—**BLUE PANTHER**
(-) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
- 9—**JUSHIN LIGER**
(7) 206, Hiroshima, Japan
- 10—**ULTIMO DRAGON**
(11) 175, Nagoya, Japan
- 11—**MASA CHONO**
(-) 235, Tokyo, Japan

- 12—**REY MISTERIO JR.**
(-) 140, San Diego, CA
- 13—**UNIVERSO 2000**
(-) 215, parts unknown
- 14—**KONNAN**
(4) 237, Mexico City, Mexico
- 15—**DUKE DROESE**
(-) 306, Chicago, IL

TOP 15 TAG TEAMS

- 1—**BILLY GUNN & JESSE JAMES**
(-) WWF World tag team champions
- 2—**RICK & SCOTT STEINER**
(2) WCW World tag team champions
- 3—**THE ROAD WARRIORS**
(3) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 4—**CHRIS CANDIDO & LANCE STORM**
(-) ECW tag team champions
- 5—**HARLEM HEAT**
(8) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title

- 6—**HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY & SHAWN MICHAELS**
(-) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 7—**MASA CHONO & KEIJI MUTO**
(-) IWGP tag team champions
- 8—**DOUG FURNAS & PHIL LAFON**
(-) No. 1 contenders: ECW tag title
- 9—**THE BARBARIAN & MENG**
(-) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 10—**JOHN KRONUS & NEW JACK**
(-) No. 2 contenders: ECW tag title

- 11—**THE HEADBANGERS**
(11) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 12—**HENRY & PHINEAS GODWINN**
(7) No. 4 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 13—**LITTLE GUIDO & TRACEY SMOTHERS**
(-) No. 3 contenders: ECW tag title
- 14—**BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
(6) No. 4 contenders: ECW tag title
- 15—**MIGUEL PEREZ & SAVIO VEGA**
(-) No. 5 contenders: WWF World tag title

These ratings are compiled by the editors with the assistance of promoters, wrestlers, and reporters around the country, and are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and the inherent skill of each wrestler. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. Championships highlighted in bold on the "Roll Call Of Champions" have changed hands since our previous issue. The information under the championship listing indicates the date that champion won the title, who the former champion was, and where the match took place.

For period ended December 10, 1997

ROLL CALL OF CHAMPIONS

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION: MITSU HARU MISAWA
(January 20, 1997; from Kenta Kobashi; Osaka, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: JOHNNY ACE & KENTA KOBASHI
(October 4, 1997; from Gary Albright & Steve Williams; Nagoya, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN UNITED NATIONAL CHAMPION: MITSU HARU MISAWA
(January 20, 1997; from Kenta Kobashi; Osaka, Japan)

AMERICAN INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: CYCLONE
(October 18, 1997; from Major Havoc; Elkin, NC)

AMERICAN INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: IRON HORSE & E.Z. RYDER
(October 18, 1997; from Don Carson & Rick Deeziel; Elkin, NC)

CENTURY WRESTLING ALLIANCE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: TITLE VACANT
(Most recently held by Kevin Sullivan)

CENTURY WRESTLING ALLIANCE CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION: MILLENNIUM
(October 18, 1997; from Joel Davis; Lawrence, MA)

ECW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: SHANE DOUGLAS
(November 30, 1997; from Bam Bam Bigelow; Monaca, PA)

ECW TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: CHRIS CANDIDO & LANCE STORM
(December 6, 1997; from Doug Furnas & Phil Lafon; Philadelphia, PA)

ECW TELEVISION CHAMPION: TAZ
(June 7, 1997; from Shane Douglas; Philadelphia, PA)

IWGP HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: KENSUKE SASAKI
(August 31, 1997; from Shinya Hashimoto; Yokohama, Japan)

IWGP INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: MASA CHONO & KEIJI MUTO
(October 19, 1997; from Kensuke Sasaki & Kazuo Yamazaki; Kobe, Japan)

MID-EASTERN WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE: SALVATORE SINCERE
(November 18, 1997; from Corporal Punishment; Keyser, WV)

MID-EASTERN WRESTLING FEDERATION LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: QUINN NASH
(November 15, 1997; beat Adam Flash & Mark Schrader in three-way match; Hampstead, MD)

MUSIC CITY WRESTLING NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPION: TERRY GOLDEN
(November 27, 1997; from Colorado Kid; Nashville, TN)

MUSIC CITY WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: SHANE EDEN & THRILLBILLY
(November 27, 1997; from The Centerfolds; Nashville, TN)

NWA HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: DAN SEVERN
(February 24, 1995; from Chris Candido; Erlanger, KY)

NWA NORTH AMERICAN HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: RECKLESS YOUTH
(June 14, 1997; from Ace Darling; Vineland, NJ)

NWA U.S. TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE MISFITS
(June 14, 1997; from The Beach Bums; Vineland, NJ)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MITSU HARU MISAWA
(January 20, 1997; from Kenta Kobashi; Osaka, Japan)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MAUNUKEA MOSSMAN
(August 22, 1997; from Yoshinari Ogawa; Tokyo, Japan)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: JOHNNY ACE & KENTA KOBASHI
(October 4, 1997; from Gary Albright & Steve Williams; Nagoya, Japan)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: TIGER KHAN
(November 21, 1997; from Cheetah Master; Reading, PA)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: RECKLESS YOUTH
(November 21, 1997; from Mike Quackenbush; Reading, PA)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: COL. JIHAD HUSSEIN & DAVE PATERA
(September 26, 1997; from Mike Quackenbush & Pat Shamrock; Reading, PA)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: RIPPER
(December 6, 1997; from Italian Stallion; Kings Mountain, NC)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MADD MAXXINE
(August 24, 1996; beat Black Angel; Forest City, NC)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: GEORGE SOUTH & ITALIAN STALLION
(December 6, 1997; from Chris Hamrick & Ripper; Kings Mountain, NC)

SOUTHERN STATES WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: WAR MACHINE
(October 25, 1997; won four-way match; Fall Branch, TN)

SOUTHERN STATES WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: DR. MIKE COOPER & BEAU JAMES
(November 14, 1997; from Death & Destruction; Fall Branch, TN)

WCW CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION: EDDY GUERRERO
(November 10, 1997; from Rey Misterio Jr.; Memphis, TN)

WCW TELEVISION CHAMPION: DISCO INFERNO
(December 8, 1997; from Perry Saturn; Buffalo, NY)

WCW U.S. CHAMPION: CURT HENNIG
(September 15, 1997; from Steve McMichael; Charlotte, NC)

WCW WORLD CHAMPION: HULK HOGAN
(August 9, 1997; from Lex Luger; Sturgis, SD)

WCW WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: RICK & SCOTT STEINER
(October 13, 1997; from Scott Hall & Syxx; Tampa, FL)

WWF EUROPEAN CHAMPION: SHAWN MICHAELS
(September 20, 1997; from Davey Boy Smith; Birmingham, England)

WWF INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION: ROCKY MAIVIA
(December 8, 1997; by forfeit from Steve Austin; Portland, ME)

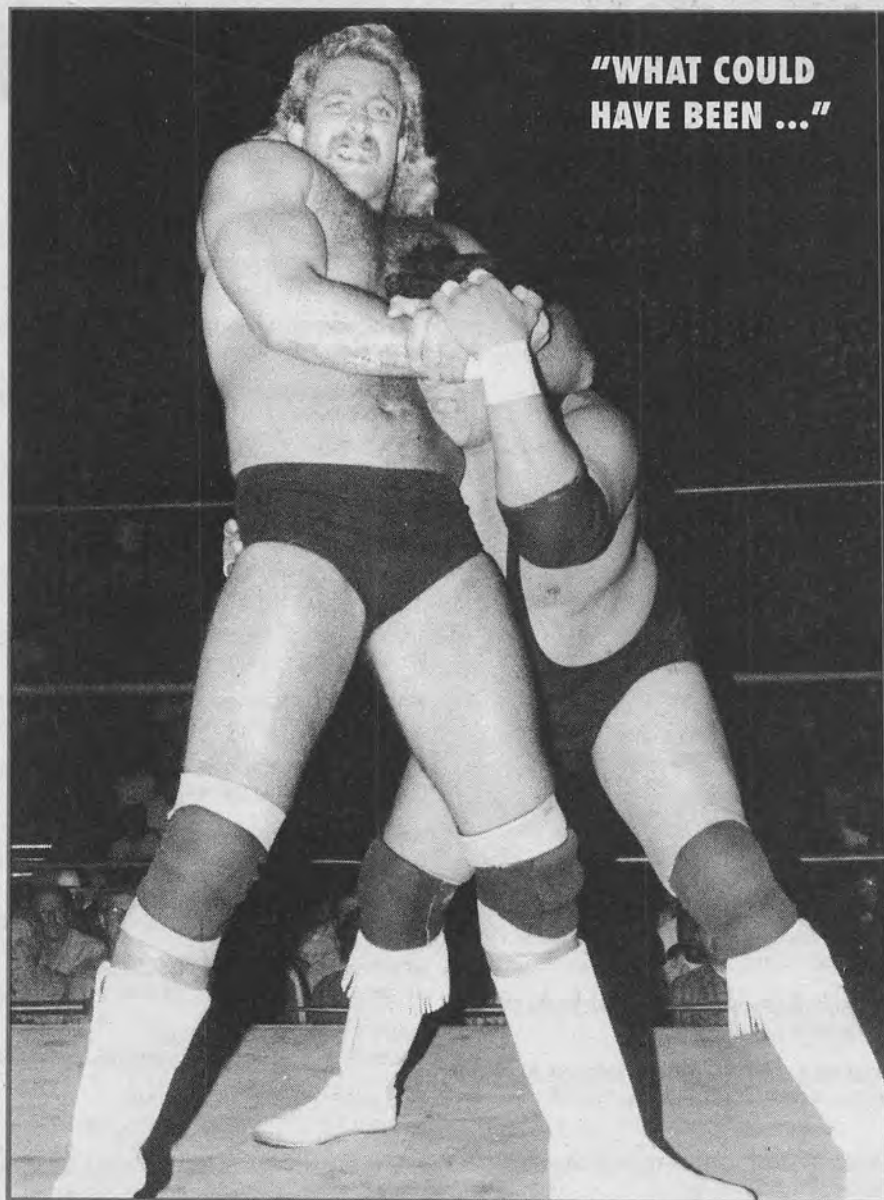
WWF LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: TAKA MICHINOKU
(December 7, 1997; beat Brian Christopher in tournament final; Springfield, MA)

WWF WORLD CHAMPION: SHAWN MICHAELS
(November 9, 1997; from Bret Hart; Montreal, Quebec)

WWF WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: BILLY GUNN & JESSE JAMES
(November 24, 1997; from The Road Warriors; Fayetteville, NC)

BLAST FROM THE PAST

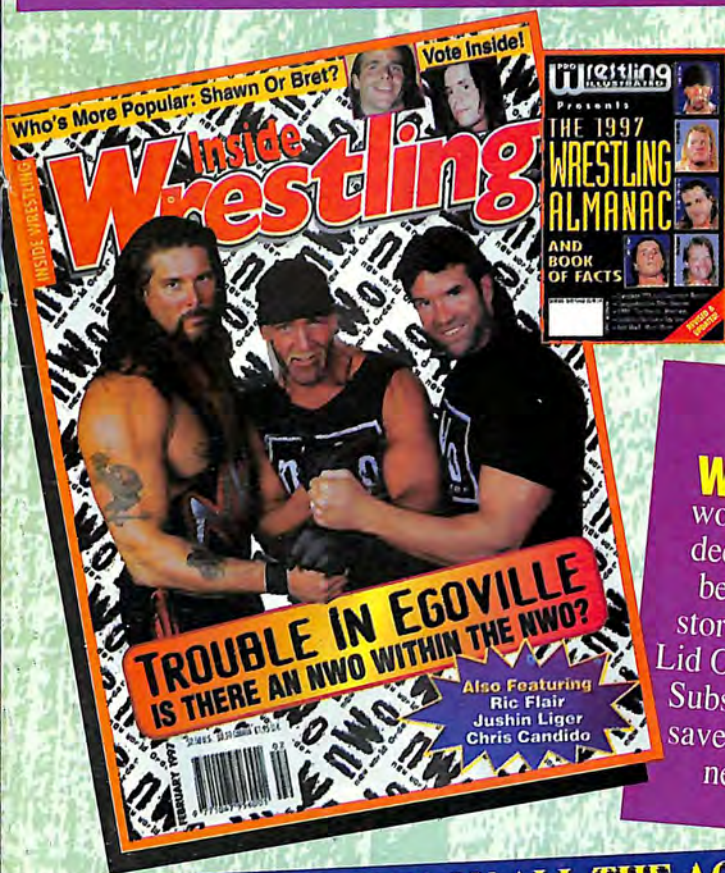
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